

BBC

THE BLOODY RISE OF HENRY V

How a brutal upbringing propelled him to greatness



HISTORY

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THE VIKINGS' SECRET WORLD

How ancient runes are unlocking
the mysteries of the Norse



Medieval pigs on the loose

The swine that made a
stink in the Middle Ages

Tales from the toilet

A 2,000-year history
of the British loo

The farmer's son who invented a Death Ray

American violence

The assassinations that shaped US history



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“Where do you like to read *BBC History Magazine*? Sitting on a train? Lounging in a cafe? Reclining on a comfortable armchair? No doubt those all apply, but I expect these pages sometimes find themselves in rather less salubrious venues, enriching the mind as the body exercises its functions. And in a way that’s rather appropriate, because as you’ll discover this month, the toilet embodies thousands of years of history, from the paper we rip to the flushes we pull. In David Musgrove’s entertaining feature on page 54 he guides us through two millennia of **Britain’s lavatorial journey**, showing how the humble loo can tell us a great deal about how past societies lived.

Another intriguing window into distant societies is explored in our cover feature, where Eleanor Barraclough invites us to take a closer look at **Viking runes**. As she explains, Viking Age culture was largely non-literate, but runes were the exception, providing an unrivalled insight into how Norse people saw themselves. Turn to page 26 to discover how they shed an intriguing light on everything from love and humour to travel and warfare.

War has, of course, been a constant of human society, with evidence for communal bloodletting going back many thousands of years. But what drives this **compulsion for violence**? That’s a question that Richard Overly tackles in this month’s ThinkPiece on page 33. It makes for fascinating and vital reading at a time when, sadly, our propensity for warfare shows little sign of abating.

Rob Attar

Editor



THREE THINGS I’VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

1. Non-survival of the tastiest

Charles Darwin spent decades researching the animals of the world, but I hadn’t previously realised the breadth of his culinary interest in them – and was surprised to learn he’d chowed down on puma, armadillo and even an owl (page 43).

2. Demonic medieval pigs

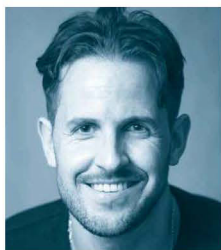
Sticking with the animal theme, I learned from Dolly Jørgensen’s article on urban pigs in the Middle Ages that the animals were thought by some to be Satan’s representatives on Earth (page 66).

3. Eastern promise

In Jerry Brotton’s fascinating article on the cardinal directions, he explains how medieval Christian maps, such as the Hereford mappa mundi, put east not north at the summit, as it was seen as a “sacred direction” (page 52).



THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS



Dan Jones

“Shakespeare’s ‘Prince Hal’ is one of his most famous historical creations – but one of his biggest flights of fancy. In researching the real Henry V’s youth, I found that he was no roistering drunk but a hard-nosed warrior.”

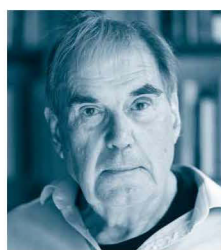
Dan tells the story of Henry V’s violent upbringing on page 20



Dolly Jørgensen

“As an environmental historian, I’m fascinated by the relations between humans and animals. The pig is a fantastic example of our intertwined histories.”

Dolly explains why our medieval ancestors were so reliant on urban pigs on page 63



Robert Bartlett

“In my book, I explore instances in which thousands – sometimes tens of thousands – of medieval books and documents went up in flames in just a couple of hours, leaving huge holes in the historical record.”

Robert Bartlett discusses the large-scale destruction of medieval manuscripts on page 68



Eleanor Barraclough

“Forget the notorious raiders of the Viking Age. Through runes, we come within touching distance of the ordinary humans who lived in this extraordinary time: a kaleidoscope of names, voices, experiences, emotions, relationships and beliefs.”

Eleanor deciphers Viking runes on page 26

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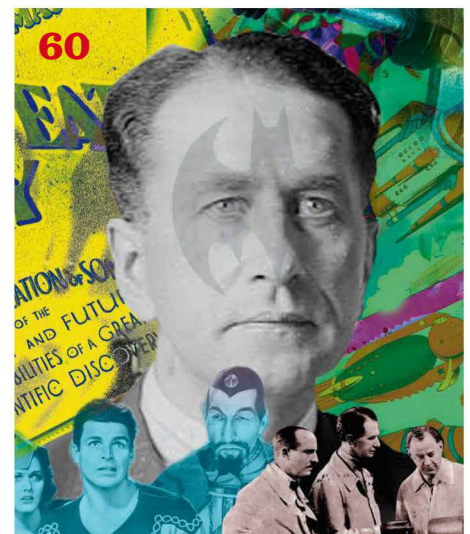
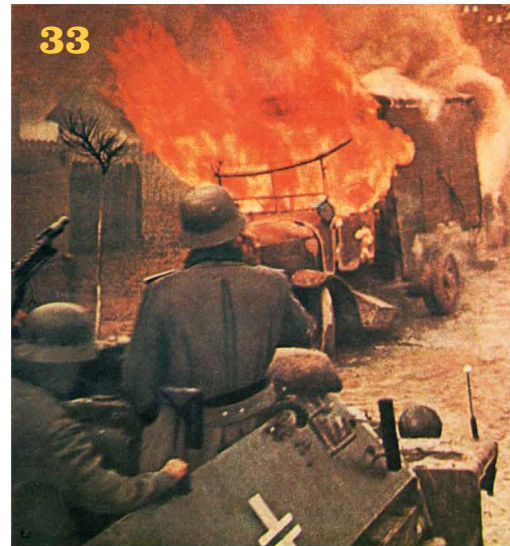
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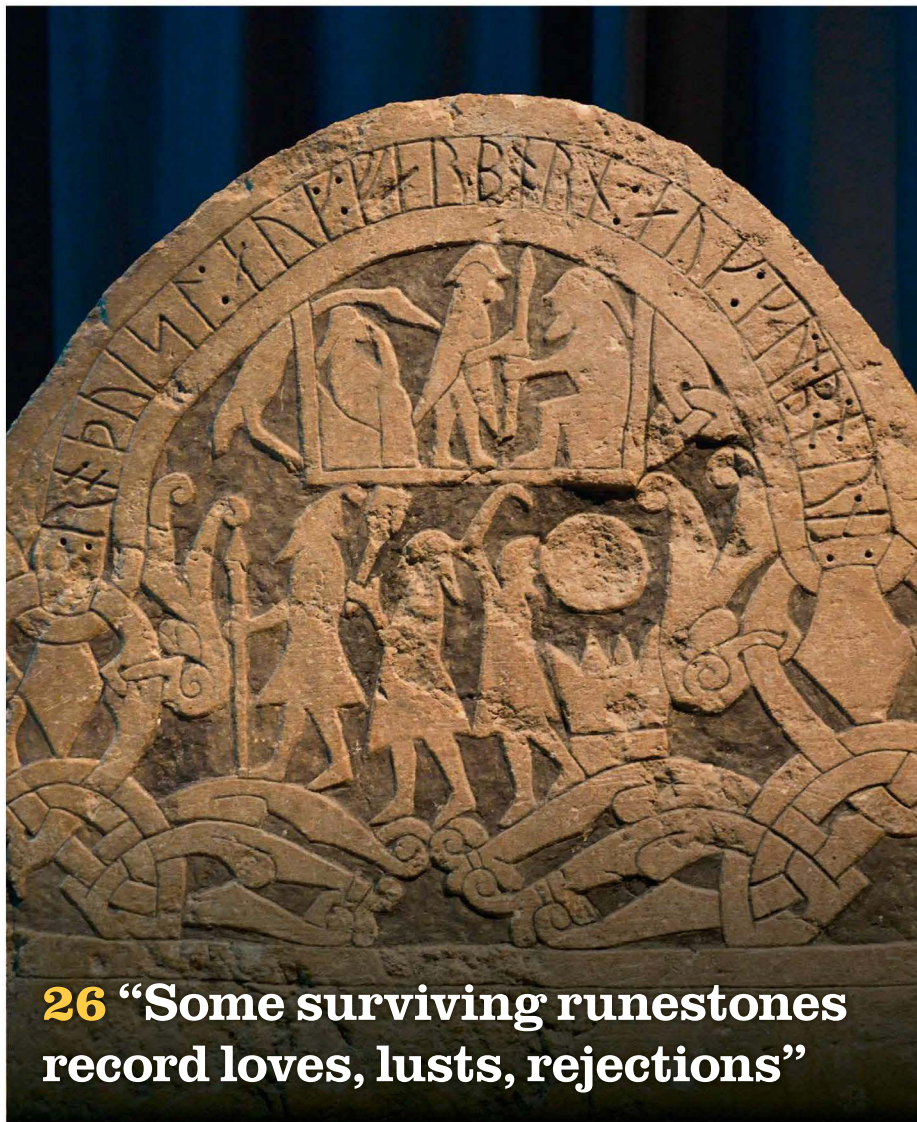
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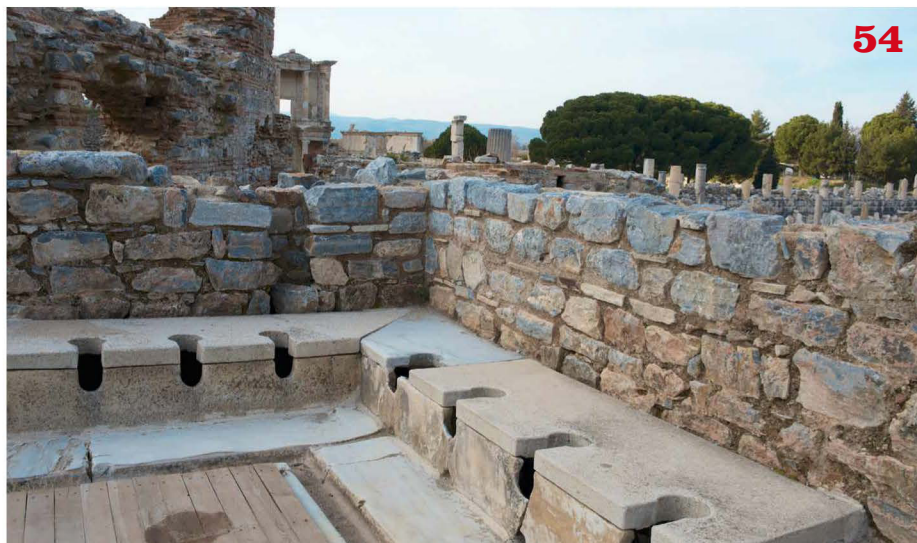


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26 “Some surviving runestones record loves, lusts, rejections”

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ANNIVERSARIES

DANNY BIRD highlights events that took place in October in history

23 OCTOBER 42 BC

Julius Caesar's assassins make their last stand

Rival Roman forces clash at Philippi

After two days of fighting near Philippi in what's now north-east Greece, the fate of the so-called Liberators was sealed.

Having absconded to the Roman Republic's eastern provinces following Caesar's murder on the Ides of March (15 March) 44 BC, the leading assassins Gaius Cassius Longinus and Marcus Junius Brutus commanded much of the eastern Mediterranean. Meanwhile, a triumvirate was forged in the west: Caesar's right-hand man, Mark Antony; his named heir and great-nephew, Octavian; and General Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. They secured control of Rome and its western provinces, then – leaving Lepidus in Italy – Antony and Octavian set out to confront their foes.

On 3 October, Octavian's army was forced onto the back foot by Brutus's legions outside Philippi, compelling Antony to divert his men away from a clash with Cassius's flank. However, Cassius mistook the ensuing confusion for defeat, and killed himself. The first battle at Philippi ended with no clear victor.

Mindful that his legions disdained his command, and that the Caesarians were dependent on supplies shipped across the Adriatic from Italy, Brutus resolved to wait it out. Soon enough, though, battle recommenced on 23 October – and it was a savage encounter.

Ultimately, Antony's cavalry routed the rump of Brutus's fighting force; fleeing into the surrounding hills, Brutus fell upon his sword. When Antony discovered the lifeless body of his foe, sources claim, he gave orders for it to be wrapped in a purple tunic and cremated; the ashes were then sent to Brutus's mother in Rome.

The civil war that rent Rome after Julius Caesar's murder ended in defeat for his assassins outside Philippi in north-east Greece



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN



Minister for transport
Barbara Castle watches a
traffic policeman test a
breathalyser in 1967



9 OCTOBER 1967

Barbara Castle, Labour minister for transport, **introduces the breathalyser** to the UK. This device enables police to instantly measure the level of alcohol in a driver's blood, reducing drink-driving incidents and revolutionising road safety. Opposition MPs accuse Castle of infringing individual liberties.

13 OCTOBER 1917

The day the sun danced

*Thousands experience
a celestial 'miracle'
in Portugal*

A little after noon on a mid-October day in 1917, a crowd of up to 70,000 pilgrims who'd gathered outside Fátima in central Portugal gazed up at a bewildering celestial anomaly.

"I looked fixedly at the sun, which seemed pale and did not hurt my eyes," a boy named Joaquim Lourenço later recounted. "Looking like a ball of snow, revolving on itself, it suddenly seemed to come down in a zigzag, menacing the Earth. Terrified, I ran and hid among the people, who were weeping and expecting the end of the world at any moment."

His words echoed those of countless others, most of whom concurred that what they'd witnessed had been a truly awesome solar phenomenon. The most common description told of the sun 'dancing' and emitting a kaleidoscopic display of colours for about 10 minutes.

Five months earlier, on 13 May, three local shepherd children – Lúcia Abobora and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto – had been tending sheep outside Fátima when, they claimed, they had received an apparition of the Virgin Mary.

The children experienced the same vision four more times, on the 13th of each following month. Word of these visitations spread, and the devout youngsters proclaimed that, on 13 October, God would perform a miracle to reinforce the Virgin's entreaty to the pious: that they should devote themselves to her Immaculate Heart.

Secular sources in Portugal and further afield reported no unusual solar activity. Might that shared vision have been the result of the power of suggestion, or retinal burn caused by staring at the sun? Whatever the true cause, in 1930 the so-called 'Miracle of the Sun' was recognised as a supernatural event by the Catholic church.

q. 611) LA MADONNA APPARE A FATIMA E PARLA CON TRE PASTORELLI

costone. Una l'assalto aveva. Aveva appreso una zona di resistenza e analizzando i strisciando tra l. Fu essa che andiera su un monte Cucco era

Luigi Barzini

DATA UNA OSPEDALE dra, maggio mano le ag: u tedesche avi ospedale. ntico, un U a silurato e a pisco la na che por- n visibili i egna della esa. Duran-

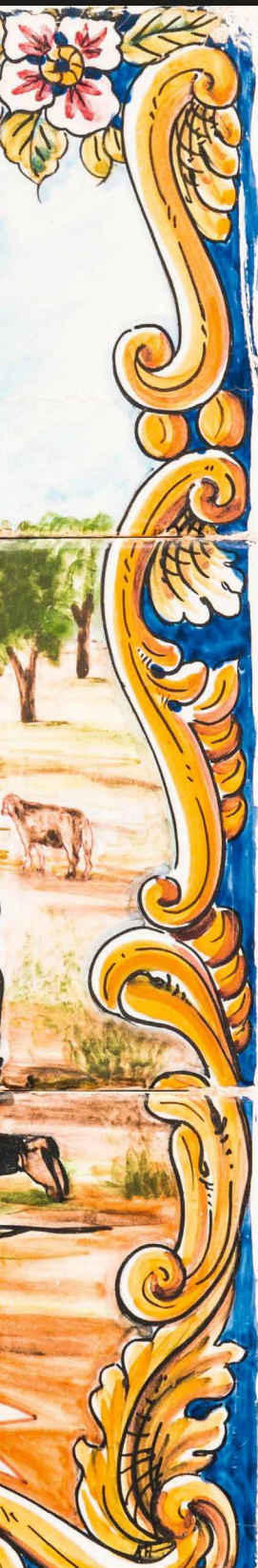
«Era una splendente, eterea figura di donna vestita d'una tunica bianca e avvolta in un alone di luce», narrano i tre fanciulli. Ha promesso che apparirà ancora nella stessa Conca di Iria tra sei mesi.

Lisbona, maggio nel mondo cattolico è giunta nella capitale portoghese dal borgo montano di Aljustrel, dipendente dalla parrocchia di Fátima. Qui, nella mattinata del 13 maggio, a tre pastorelli che pascolavano le greggi di proprietà della loro famiglia, è apparsa la Madonna, che ha parlato amorevolmente con loro ed ha promesso una nuova, prossima apparizione. I pastorelli sono Lúcia dos Santos, di 10 anni, e i suoi cuginetti

intenti a giocare allorché un lampo abbagliante ha percorso il cielo terso. Spaventati, i tre bimbi si son fermati, e Lúcia ha detto: «Verrà certamente la pioggia. Sarà molto torrenziale».



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Azulejo tilework depicts the claimed appearance of the Virgin Mary in Fátima, Portugal, in 1917; the first apparition made headlines in Italy; tens of thousands witness the 'Miracle of the Sun' on 13 October; Lúcia Abobora (centre) and Jacinta and Francisco Marto, who were reputedly visited by Mary



10 OCTOBER 1903

Emmeline Pankhurst founds the Women's Social and Political Union in Manchester to campaign for women's suffrage, having told her friends that "we must do the work ourselves". The WSPU will employ increasingly militant tactics to draw attention to its demand for votes for women.



Emmeline Pankhurst, founder of the Women's Social and Political Union, photographed c1909

**31 OCTOBER 1517**

Martin Luther launches the Reformation

The theologian publishes an inflammatory set of proposals

All Hallows' Eve 1517 seemed much like any other in Wittenberg, a major city of the Holy Roman Empire. According to 16th-century theologian Philip Melancthon, though, it was on this day that Martin

Luther, then a professor at Wittenberg University, nailed his *Ninety-five Theses* to the door of All Saints' Church – triggering aftershocks that would be felt for centuries to come.

Whether this now-famous incident actually occurred as claimed – with the *Theses* literally nailed to the door – has been disputed for centuries. Yet it's certainly true that Luther's document precipitated the greatest upheaval in Europe since the fall of the Western Roman empire in AD 476: the Protestant Reformation.

Luther had written his treatise in frustration at what he perceived as an epidemic of 'indulgences' sweeping the dioceses of the Holy Roman Empire and, by extension, Christendom. Indulgences were certificates granted by papal authority that promised to cancel all or part of the buyer's debt of sin – and, thus, effectively guaranteed a reduced

term of suffering in purgatory after death. By the early 16th century, the trade in indulgences had become so lucrative that the Holy See in Rome was using it to bankroll the reconstruction of Saint Peter's Basilica.

Although Prince Frederick III had banned indulgences in Wittenberg, many citizens were travelling elsewhere to purchase them. Luther expressed his outrage in the *Theses*, written while the printing revolution was sweeping the continent. The document was thus swiftly reproduced, translated and disseminated across German-speaking Europe and beyond.

Appalled by the *Theses*, the archbishop of Mainz dispatched a copy to Rome. Despite his trenchant criticisms of the Catholic church's practices, Luther hadn't intended to rebuke the pope's authority. However, his 86th thesis

Fireworks streak the New York sky at the 1886 inauguration of the sculpture now known as the Statue of Liberty



28 OCTOBER 1886

In New York Harbor, President Grover Cleveland dedicates the 46-metre-high copper-clad **Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World**, a gift from France to commemorate the centenary of American independence. The festivities are enjoyed by more than a million revellers.



ILLUSTRATION BY CAT O'NEIL

pointedly asked: "Why does not the pope, whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build the basilica of Saint Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?"

Luther was confident that his well-intended treatise would receive a fair hearing and yield change. However, the church resolved to muzzle the audacious theologian. Pope Leo X ordered Luther to recant his views – and after he refused to do so, the latter was excommunicated, in 1521.

That same year, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V convened the Diet of Worms, aiming to pressure Luther into renouncing his writings. Luther refused, and the emperor issued the Edict of Worms denouncing the theologian as an outlaw and heretic whose murder was sanctioned by the state.

GETTY IMAGES



British trade envoy James Cross in 1970. Earlier that year he'd been kidnapped by a separatist group

16 OCTOBER 1970

The October Crisis grips Canada

Separatist violence triggers the suspension of civil liberties

On an autumn evening in 1970, Canadians tuned in to watch prime minister Pierre Trudeau deliver a televised address to the nation. "There are very few times in the history of any country when all persons must take a stand on critical issues," he said. "This is one of those times; this is one of those issues."

Trudeau went on to explain his government's extraordinary decision to suspend civil liberties across Canada in response to an apparent insurrection in the French-speaking province of Quebec. The War Measures Act suspended civil liberties and granted authorities sweeping powers.

Over the preceding years, the separatist Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) had conducted an increasingly violent campaign, mainly in Montreal. Its aim was to exacerbate class tensions in Quebec by inspiring the predominantly French-speaking and working-class population to revolt against the English-speaking minority at the top of society.

To that end, the FLQ stockpiled dynamite and weapons, and attacked federal buildings. In February 1969, the

most violent episode saw the Montreal stock exchange destroyed by an explosion that injured 27 people.

Then, on 5 October 1970, FLQ militants abducted a British trade envoy, James Cross. Five days later, Quebec's deputy premier, Pierre Laporte, was also kidnapped.

On 15 October, 3,000 FLQ supporters assembled in Montreal's Paul Sauvé Arena. Within 72 hours, though, Trudeau's government invoked the War Measures Act, Laporte's body was discovered in the boot of a car outside Saint-Hubert Airport, and support for the FLQ began to haemorrhage.

After two months in captivity, Cross was released in exchange for the safe passage of five FLQ members to Cuba. All later returned to Canada to face justice. Laporte's murderers were arrested in late December, bringing the crisis to an end; they were sentenced to life in prison. Meanwhile, the Trudeau government's decision to suspend civil liberties remains a controversial topic among Canadians even today. **H**

Danny Bird is content producer on *BBC History Magazine*

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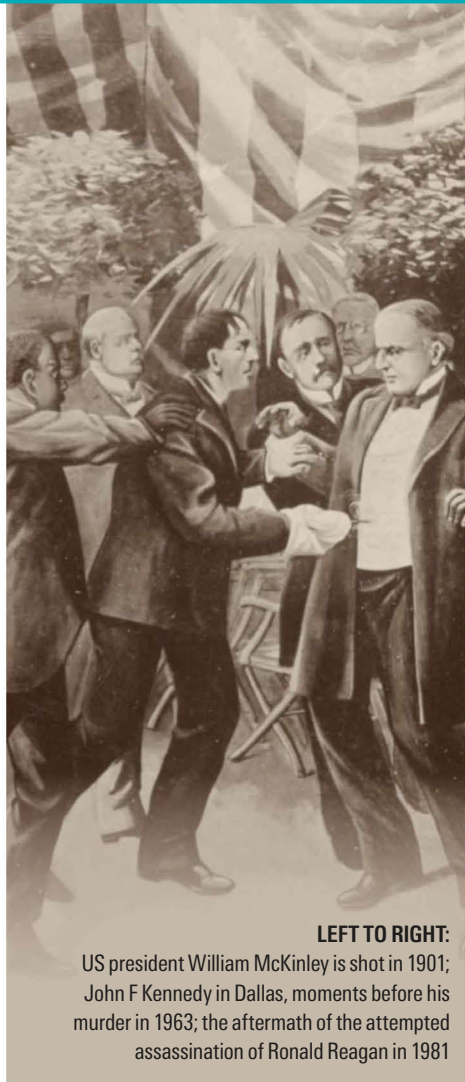
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THE CONVERSATION

EXPERTS DEBATE HISTORY'S BIGGEST ISSUES



LEFT TO RIGHT:

US president William McKinley is shot in 1901;
John F Kennedy in Dallas, moments before his
murder in 1963; the aftermath of the attempted
assassination of Ronald Reagan in 1981



BEHIND THE NEWS

A history of political violence

Following the attempted assassination of Donald Trump in July, Matt Elton spoke to historian **ADAM IP SMITH** about the history of violent attacks on US leaders, and the political and social repercussions of such assaults across the decades

Matt Elton Assassinations, and attempted assassinations, have occurred around the world throughout history. But is there a particularly American aspect to this story of political violence?

Adam IP Smith I think there is. Political violence is hardly unique to the US, sadly, so we must be careful about ascribing American exceptionalism to what we saw at Donald Trump's rally [in Pennsylvania on 13 July]. There is nevertheless an American political tradition into which this specific kind of gun violence – the attempted assassination of leading political figures, especially presidents and presidential candidates – fits.

As a historian, do you think it's a stretch to suggest that the violence that shaped the founding of the modern nation may have paved the way for later political violence in the US?

Certainly the political polarisation and the potential for political violence we're seeing today form part of a recurrent pattern in US history. There are several reasons, but maybe the core one is that there's long been a fundamental disagreement within the US about who constitutes the legitimate American nation. That has led to a fear, genuinely held by significant numbers of people involved in the political process, that the stakes are so high because if their political enemies win then everything will be lost – that their freedom, the republic, even their own place in society will be jeopardised.

That's partly because, from the beginning, the president of the United States has held many of the powers held by monarchs – in some respects, even greater powers. George Washington had more influence over the government of the US

// The global impact of these events is one way of measuring the significance of the US in people's imaginations //

than George III had over the government in London, for instance. So the monarchical style of the US head of state puts a huge amount of pressure on that role, which needs to feel like the embodiment of America at that particular moment in time.

The first US president targeted was Andrew Jackson in 1835 – an episode that's less familiar to many in the UK than later attempts. Why is that?

The reason may be just that it was unsuccessful: the gun wielded by the would-be assassin malfunctioned. If Jackson had been shot on the steps of the Capitol, then we would know about it.

Jackson already had a bullet lodged in him from an earlier duel, one of several he'd fought (in one of which, some 30 years earlier, he'd killed a man). So Jackson himself was no stranger to gun violence. He was a deeply controversial and polarising figure – and, perhaps not irrelevantly to this conversation, the president to whom those advancing Trump's agenda have most wanted to compare Trump.

Jackson was kind of an outsider – the

original 'drain the Washington swamp' candidate. He first ran to become president in 1824, but failed due to what he called a "corrupt bargain", and argued that the election had been stolen from him. He ran again in 1828 and won convincingly, defeating John Quincy Adams, who was the last of the old guard.

In fact, Jackson was a wealthy slave holder in Tennessee – he wasn't some hard-scrabble guy anymore – but he had literally been born in a log cabin and had worked his way up. Like Trump – indeed, like Trump's new running mate, JD Vance, and many other big figures in American political history – he was of Scots Protestant Irish descent.

The tradition that Jackson, Trump and Vance have tried to embody is one of rugged individualism, of standing up for yourself. It's a kind of frontier mythos – the idea that in the end you have nothing to rely on but your wits and your bravery and your courage, and it's all about you and your family.

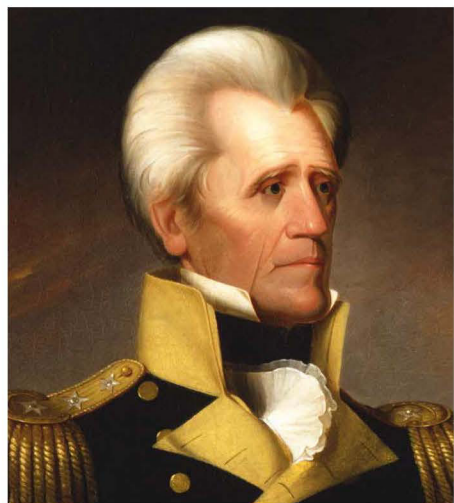
Jackson was both a perpetrator and a victim of gun violence. So in a way, if he had have been shot, it wouldn't have fundamentally changed the image of him. It would almost have seemed fitting for him to die in that way, such was the nature of the romance built up around him.

Some presidential assassinations had repercussions not just in the US but on the world stage. What examples are particularly illuminating in terms of that wider picture?

The global impact of these events is one way of measuring the significance of the US in people's imaginations. News of Lincoln's assassination in April 1865 reached Britain a week or so after the event, having been carried by the fastest ship to the west coast of Ireland, then transmitted by telegraph from there to London.

Clearly, the assassination of a head of state was dramatic enough, but so much more so because it occurred after the end of the American Civil War. Lincoln was a man who was imagined to have freed America's enslaved people, and who'd worked his way up, with no formal education – a kind of working-class hero. So big public meetings were held in Hyde Park in London, and in cities all around the world, reflecting a genuine sense of shock and trauma.

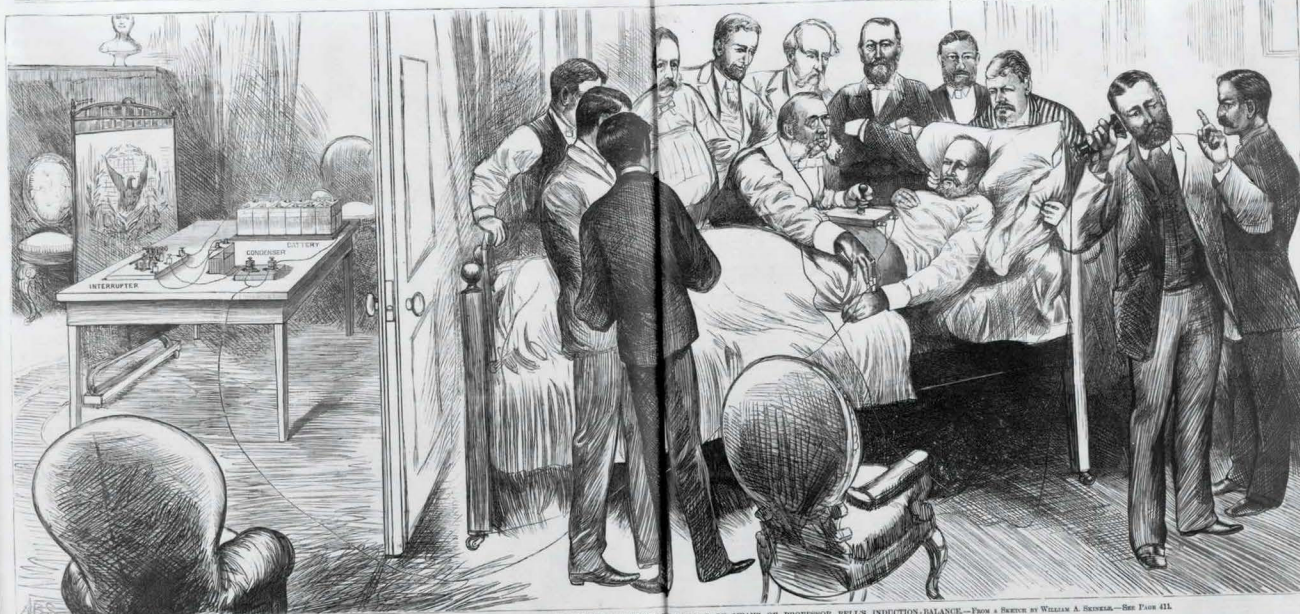
Just over 16 years later, President James A Garfield was shot. He didn't die immediately, but lingered on for several months. By then, the transatlantic telegraph system had become effective, so his was the first US presidential assassination to be experienced



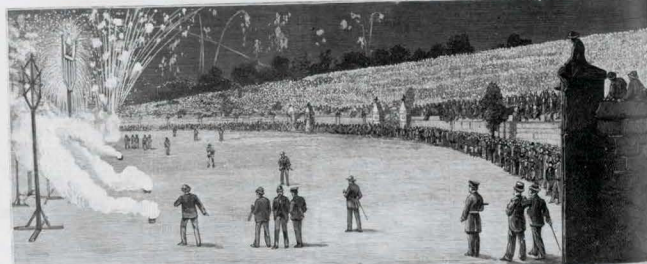
A portrait of President Andrew Jackson in 1835, when he survived an assassination attempt. Donald Trump's supporters have drawn parallels between the two men



John Wilkes Booth shoots Abraham Lincoln in Ford's Theatre, Washington DC, on 14 April 1865. The murder provoked a sense of shock around the world



WASHINGTON, D. C.—THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT—THE DISCOVERY OF THE LOCATION OF THE BULLET BY MEANS OF PROFESSOR BELL'S INDUCTION-BALANCE.—FROM A SKETCH BY WILLIAM A. SKEEL.—SEE PAGE 411.



NEW YORK.—FIRST CELEBRATION OF PRESIDENT GARFIELD'S RECOVERY.—THE DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS AT FORT GREENE, BROOKLYN, AUGUST 4TH.—SEE PAGE 411.



NEW JERSEY.—THE SEASIDE SABBATH-SCHOOL ASSEMBLY AT AUDUBON PARK, AUGUST 20-17TH.—THE EVENING FRAMES-SERVICE IN THE PAVILION ON THE BEACH, AUGUST 21ST.—FROM A SKETCH BY A. HENRY JONES.—SEE PAGE 411.

Following the roll-out of telegraph systems, news of the 1881 shooting of President James A. Garfield and his condition became a news phenomenon, reflected by this spread in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*

in real time by Europeans and indeed by Americans around the rest of the country. Because it was an ongoing story, with bulletins issued from the president's house, it was dragged out over a long period of time and became a global news phenomenon – as did the assassination of President William McKinley 20 years later.

The assassination of John F. Kennedy on 22 November 1963 was the first to be filmed, with footage taken by a bystander, Abraham Zapruder, made public some years after the shooting. As with so much about America, the world took notice – because everything about the US seems to take place on this massive, consequential scale.

Various conspiracy theories surround Kennedy's assassination. Is that fact linked to the international shock and the global scale of such events?

It's really difficult for people to accept that events that have huge consequences may have had tiny causes. In the case of the Kennedy assassination, the idea that the life of this charismatic, glamorous young president – a hugely consequential figure in the context of the Cold War – could be cut short, that the US and the world could be

robbed of his life and his leadership, struck people as a deeply upsetting, outrageous blow. So the idea that the cause of that blow could be one disaffected man, Lee Harvey Oswald, just didn't compute.

The natural tendency is to think: well, something else is at work here. This must be the Cubans, the Russians, or maybe – and of course this became one of the most prominent Kennedy conspiracy theories – we've somehow done this to ourselves as Americans. Maybe it's the FBI or some sinister group within what some on the right now call the 'Deep State'.

That reinforces a recurrent fear and

It's really difficult for people to accept that events that have huge consequences may have had tiny causes

anxiety in American politics: we cannot hold this thing together because there are those among us, potentially millions and millions of them, who are fundamentally opposed to what we are trying to do as real Americans, defenders of the revolution, lovers of freedom, or whatever it might be. That might be a sinister cadre in the 'Deep State'; it might be millions of MAGA Trump supporters; it might be the 'liberal elite' supporting Kamala Harris – whatever it is, at any given moment the stakes feel so high. So people look for conspiratorial, big picture explanations.

What were the impacts of the attempt to assassinate Ronald Reagan?

On 30 March 1981, Reagan was approaching his limousine after delivering a speech in Washington DC when he was shot by John Hinckley Jr. The president was rushed by the secret service to a hospital, where he underwent surgery; the bullet was removed and he recovered.

It was obviously a very dramatic and distressing moment – and one that Reagan brilliantly turned to his advantage. Stories circulated that as he was on the operating table, just before the anaesthetic took effect,



Security staff surround some of the people injured in the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan in 1981. The president was wounded in the attack, but survived – and gained political capital from his reactions

he looked at the doctors and, with his trademark chuckle, said: “I hope you guys are all Republicans.” One of the doctors reportedly responded: “Today, Mr President, we’re all Republicans” – which of course was a great line to spin out. When he was giving a speech a few years later, a balloon popped nearby – and, without missing a beat, Reagan said: “Missed me.”

Reagan was a great showman, like Donald Trump is a great showman, and he made great political capital out of this attempt on his life and the sangfroid with which he’d responded.

Do you think that there is a direct relationship between political discourse and political violence, and are there examples that demonstrate that point?

In a way, this gets to the heart of the problem. Is there a direct relationship? No. Is there a relationship? Yes, there surely must be. So does this explain what the shooter was doing in Pennsylvania on 13 July?

In this case, of course, we will probably never know his motivations. However, plenty of Republicans have said that this shooting was a direct consequence of Democrats warning that Donald Trump is an authoritarian, a fascist and so on, and that if he becomes president, American democracy is on the line. Therefore, by implication, he must be stopped at all costs.

Does it more broadly explain not just why this happened but why there was an attack on [former speaker of the House of Representatives] Nancy Pelosi’s husband; why there was an attempted kidnapping of Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer;

// Violence and American politics have gone hand in hand right from the beginning, partly linked to the availability of guns //



Donald Trump with a bandaged ear, days after the failed assassination attempt in Pennsylvania on 13 July



Gretchen Whitmer, Democratic governor of Michigan, in 2022. Two years earlier, 14 men were charged with plotting to kidnap her

why two congressmen have been shot in the past 10 or 15 years; why we see a lot of violence around the edges of political rallies; why we see pushing and shoving of press representatives; why we see frequent threats of violence to American politicians?

At the moment, American politics is intensely polarised. It’s partisan in a way that is just not true in Britain at the moment, and wasn’t true in the US through the 1960s and even into the nineties, but that has been true in the US in the past. I think that, though there is no direct relationship between political violence and polarisation, it’s clear that when you have a highly polarised polity, when people are driven to the point of believing that so much is at stake if the other side wins, then it’s not really so surprising when these kinds of attacks happen.

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination attempt on Trump, President Biden said: “The idea that there’s political violence or violence in America like this is just unheard of.”

Do you think that the US has a problem with recognising the violence in its history?

The idea that this is somehow sort of un-American is palpably ridiculous. Violence and American politics have gone hand in hand right from the beginning, and some of this – perhaps quite a lot of it – is not just to do with the polarisation of politics, which is periodic, but to do with the massive availability of guns. In a country where there are more guns than there are people, where it’s extraordinarily easy to get hold of firearms, clearly this kind of assassination attempt is far more likely than it otherwise would be. **H**



Adam IP Smith is Edward Orsborn professor of United States politics & political history at the University of Oxford. He is also the host of The Last Best Hope? podcast



MICHAEL WOOD ON... GAZA'S ASTONISHING CULTURAL HERITAGE

// The current destruction in Gaza is more thorough than any ancient siege //

.....
Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series. His latest book is *In the Footsteps of Du Fu* (Simon & Schuster, 2023). You'll find him on X at *MichaelWoodMV*

B B C

BACK IN THE MID-NINETIES, I WENT ON A journey following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, travelling down through Lebanon to Egypt, and I stayed in Gaza. Alexander had waged a brutal siege of the city, which ended with the vindictive killing of the heroic governor, Batis, who was dragged around the walls behind Alexander's chariot, as Achilles had done with Hector. War is a horrible business. And Gaza has known more than most.

My photos show the old Great Mosque, with its huge circular window; originally a temple to Marnas, the chief Gazan deity, then a Byzantine church, it's now destroyed. The Greek church of St Porphyrius, perhaps the third-oldest in the world, has been wrecked. The souk, squares, gardens and orchards – all obliterated, along with mosques, churches, universities, libraries, hospitals, schools, museums, cemeteries, even the zoo.

Back then I stayed in the Marna Guest House. Opened in 1946, it was run by Alia al-Shawa, a warm hostess from an old Gazan family. There was a sunlit terrace, a garden with a huge plane tree, and an old well of good water for which Gaza was once famous.

That first evening I had a dinner with Gazan scholars including Dr Moain Sadek, who had studied in Germany and had just become head of Gazan Antiquities; he has since written distinguished studies on Gazan archaeology and architecture. We talked about the city's long history: first settled in the fifth millennium BC, Gaza has always been a crossroads between Egypt, the Near East and Anatolia. It was sacked and ruined many times – including bombing by the British in 1917 – but always rose again.

After dinner we walked in the garden. "In the west, when you think of Gaza, you think of violence and war, poverty and despair," observed Dr Sadek. "But there's another Gaza – rich in ancient heritage, openness to the world and a determination to preserve the culture of the past amid all the destruction." After all, he smiled, "the cradle of civilisation – the Fertile Crescent – runs through the orchards of Gaza".

That night, I curled up with a book on the history of Gaza from the house library. Published in 1963, it was part of a series called *The Centers of Civilisation*, which was "devoted to the cities that from earliest times to the present have exercised a radiating influence upon the eras in which they flourish": Bukhara, Constantinople, Athens, Fez, Florence, Kyoto – and a volume on Gaza.

In the fifth and sixth centuries AD, a group of writers and thinkers worked at the famous School of Gaza that attracted students from all over the classical world, their links reaching as far as Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria. Indeed, the writer Aeneas of Gaza claimed that, when the Academy in Athens was shut down by Justinian in AD 529, some teachers migrated to Gaza. There, the classical tradition was transformed in the new world of Late Antique Eastern Christianity. Members of the Gazan schools mixed with the local cultures of philosophers, rhetoricians, hermits and monks from nearby monasteries.

Classical theatre was still popular in sixth-century Gaza. The public baths were adorned with paintings of the Theseus myth and scenes from the *Iliad*. The Christian philosopher Procopius of Gaza (from whom 169 letters survive) had a remarkable library comprising not only Christian literature but also an unbelievable range of works by the ancients, from Homer to Euripides, in the belief that culture also depended on the pagan classics. When the Syrian Theodore of Tarsus became archbishop of Canterbury in the seventh century, he arrived with Procopius's biblical commentaries in his baggage.

That's just a snapshot of just one chapter of Gaza's rich story. Travelling the world making films over the past 40 years, I have seen the devastation of war in old Mosul, Kabul, Aleppo before the fall – the barbaric work of the modern sackers of cities. The current destruction in Gaza is more thorough than any ancient siege sung about in the city laments of Iraq or the Book of Lamentations. The loss of life now is horrendous. But also important over the past 70 years has been Gaza's continued enforced isolation from the world, and the world from Gaza. Its role as a vibrant, historic Levantine city has been shut down. Only when that isolation comes to an end will it be able to reconnect with the Mediterranean world to which it belongs, and to which it has contributed so much. Let's hope that Gaza, now in the nadir of its fortunes, will rise again. **H**



ILLUSTRATION BY FEMKE DE JONG



HIDDEN HISTORIES

KAVITA PURI on a little-known but pivotal moment in Spanish history

// Though Moors no longer rule these parts, their presence is felt every day //

AS I WRITE THIS COLUMN, I AM SITTING NOT far from the fortified town of Moclín in southern Spain, with a view of an old Moorish watchtower on top of a hill swathed in olive groves. It's a vista that's remained essentially unchanged for many centuries.

I live part of my life here, and spend a lot of time writing with this view as my companion. The *Torre atalaya de Mingoandrés* is one of a handful of similar medieval watchtowers dotted around the area north-west of Granada. This is a hugely historic place in the story of modern Spain – yet, for some reason, it is little known outside the region.

The name Moclín derives from the Arabic *Hisn al-Muklin*, meaning 'castle of the district'. The Nasrids, who ruled the Emirate of Granada from 1232 until 1492 and were the last Muslim dynasty in the Iberian peninsula, called it the 'shield of Granada'. In the final decades of Muslim rule, Moclín was a highly strategic spot on the border between Moorish Granada and the Christian kingdom of Castile.

The Nasrids built a fortress here to watch and patrol the frontier, and to protect the town from attack. The watchtower I can see now was part of that fortress's wider defensive network, which controlled access to the town; four more still stand nearby. They must have done their job because an assault in 1485 by the Catholic Monarchs,

Ferdinand and Isabella, was repelled; it's said that around a thousand footsoldiers and horsemen stood their ground. The following year, though, the Christian forces launched another attack – and this time breached the castle walls, forcing the Moors' surrender in Moclín. The Catholic Monarchs are believed to have stayed here until they captured Granada seven years later.

Today, the fortress is in disrepair, and mostly closed – though if you're lucky, you'll find a local guide to show you around. Just before the final steep climb to the fortress is a church, the Santuario del Cristo del Paño (Sanctuary of the Christ of the Cloth), built where a mosque once stood. The story goes that Ferdinand and Isabella established the church after the capture of Moclín from the Moors, donating to it a large painting of Christ bearing the cross – a painting on cloth previously used as a banner by the Christian soldiers, according to legend. The painting reputedly has miraculous healing powers, and thousands of pilgrims flock here each October to see it.

The Alhambra in Granada is the most-visited historic monument in Spain – and rightly so. But Moclín, only a 45-minute drive away, is also an important place in the modern nation's story. It was the site of a key moment leading to the expulsion from Granada in 1492 of the last sultan, Muhammad XI (known as Boabdil), which brought an end to Moorish rule in Iberia, their final

remaining foothold in Europe. Yet Moclín, and the Catholic Monarchs' stay here, is rarely mentioned in history textbooks even in Spain. If people visit the town, it is to enjoy a well-known scenic walk rather than to visit the fortress or the church.

These watchtowers, now protected as national monuments, have seen so much history. Since they were built all those centuries ago, dynasties have risen and fallen, and battles have been won and lost – including more recent clashes during the Spanish Civil War on the very land in which they stand. Though Moors no longer rule these parts, their presence is felt every day: these majestic towers continue to stand tall, seen by local residents, and remain an intrinsic part of the region's landscape – just as much as the olive trees and the deep red earth. **H**

The fortress of Moclín, built in the later Middle Ages by the Nasrid sultans of nearby Granada, southern Spain. Its capture by Christian forces in 1486 augured the fall of Granada – and the end of Muslim rule on the Iberian peninsula

Kavita Puri

is a journalist and broadcaster for BBC Radio 4. Her latest BBC Sounds podcast, *Three Million*, charts the 1943 Bengal Famine. She is also author of *Partition Voices: Untold British Stories* (Bloomsbury, 2019)





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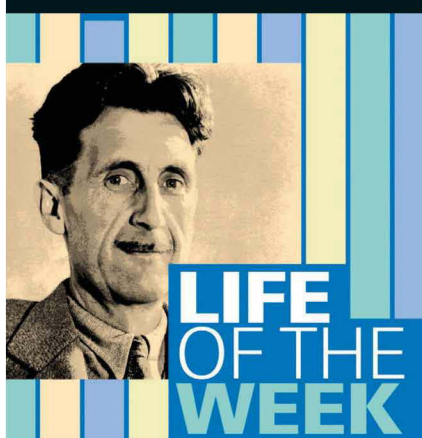
MEDIEVAL



Criminals on crusade

Not everyone who headed out on crusade had God's work in mind. As **Steve Tibble** reveals, the wars in the Holy Land were accompanied by an underbelly of underhand activities, including piracy, gang crime and murder.

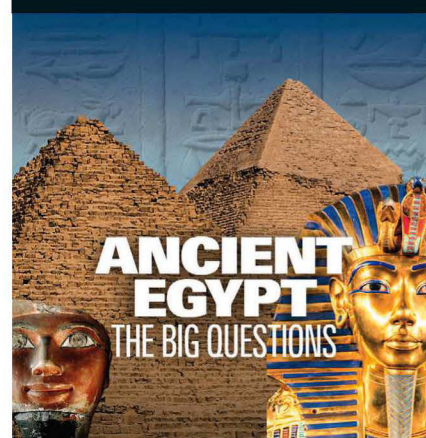
BIOGRAPHY



Dystopian dreams

What led the celebrated author of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to imagine such dark, dystopian worlds? **Laura Beers** takes listeners inside the Orwellian mindset, exploring how the writer's work was shaped by his life and times.

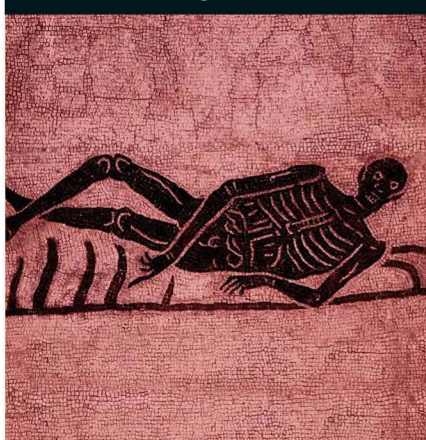
ANCIENT



An A-Z of Egypt

From the pyramids and mummification to culture, language and religion, Egyptologist **Campbell Price** guides listeners through all facets of life in ancient Egypt in this new five-part series. Tune in for your ultimate guide to the ancient civilisation.

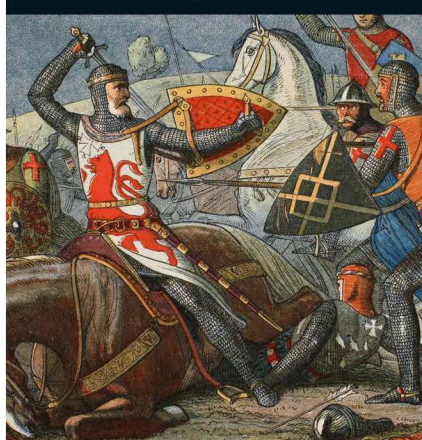
ANCIENT



Disease and decline

In AD 165, Rome was riding high – enjoying a period of stability, prosperity and relative peace. Then the Antonine Plague hit, bringing chaos, fear and death. **Colin Elliott** explores the pandemic's impact on the Roman world and its possible role in the empire's demise.

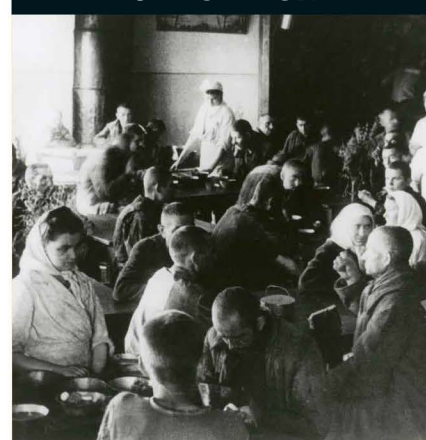
MEDIEVAL



Dark trophies

When rebel baron Simon de Montfort was killed at the battle of Evesham in 1265, his body was hacked up into pieces that ended up spread across the country. **Sophie Thérèse Ambler** reveals why these grisly trophies were sent as threats, collected as souvenirs, and venerated as relics.

20TH CENTURY



Battle for life

The Soviet gulag was known as a place of misery, brutality and death. But paradoxically, some 10,000 doctors – 40 per cent of whom were prisoners themselves – were tasked with keeping the inmates alive. **Dan Healey** reveals how these workers faced up to this impossible challenge.

LETTERS

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Warrior women

I enjoyed Daisy Dunn's feature on women of the Greco-Persian wars (July) and would like to bring attention to another instance of women's contribution to the wars against Persia. One hundred and fifty years after the events Dunn details, Alexander the Great continued the Greco-Persian wars by invading the Persian empire. Multiple ancient writers agree that his burning of the palace at Persepolis was revenge for the Persian destruction of Athens in 480 BC.

Significantly, Plutarch writes that this rancorous act was incited by Thais, mistress of one of Alexander's generals. While Dunn's article features many influential women already in positions of titular authority, the inclusion of Thais in Plutarch's narrative is a reminder of other ways in which women throughout history have reached the room where it happens – or rather, the pages where Plutarch decided what happened.

Isabelle Watts, Stratford-upon-Avon



A 19th-century relief sculpture depicting the burning of Persepolis in 330 BC. Reader Isabelle Watts notes the key role of a woman in this event



We reward the Letter of the Month writer with a copy of a new book. This issue, that's **Perfection: 400 Years of Women's Quest for Beauty** by Margarette Lincoln. Read our review on page 72

The bravery of Bruce

I was looking forward to Fiona Watson's article on Robert the Bruce (*The Man, the Myth, the Murderer*, August), but came away disappointed. She claims Robert murdered [Scottish baron] John Comyn. Did he? Even now, no one knows the full story. Yes, Robert was bloodthirsty and committed acts of slaughter – but so did every other medieval king! That's how things were done.

Robert was incredibly brave in strength and emotions. An excellent fighter and a brilliant strategist, he lost most of his family on the battlefield or through murder. But, above all, he wanted the people of Scotland to live peacefully in an independent nation. When he died, all of Scotland mourned.

To get the fully rounded story of this truly great man, I recommend people should read Phil Carradice's [2022 book] *Robert the Bruce: Scotland's True Braveheart*.

Susan Bruce, Leeds

Naval heroes

Max Hastings is a much-respected historian, but I was disappointed with his comments on February 1942's 'Channel Dash', in which he says German battleships "passed up the Channel without the navy doing anything to stop them" (*Books Interview*, July).

This is incorrect. My uncle, Petty Officer Thomas H McGee, died aboard the destroyer HMS *Worcester* along with more than 20 other brave men as part of the naval flotilla sent to intercept the ships. The *Worcester* was hit by eight shells in three minutes from *Gneisenau* and *Prinz Eugen*. More than 40 aircraft were also lost. Most of the graves of these valiant men are in Shotley Royal Naval Cemetery in Suffolk.

Phil Brown, Stourport-on-Severn

Diversity and deindustrialisation

In his column (September), Michael Wood writes: "For the first time, arguably, we have a government that reflects British society... with a black foreign secretary and a female chancellor." In fact, the previous government was fairly diverse. There had been both a black and female foreign secretary and a female prime minister; four female home secretaries, two of which were of Asian heritage; two male home secretaries of black and Asian heritage; two chancellors of Asian heritage, and the first PM of Asian heritage.

Wood also mentions that "the Thatcher era... saw Britain's deindustrialisation". That's a bit of a sweeping statement. The 1980s saw the transformation of state-subsidised, loss-making, heavily unionised industries



into efficient, competitive firms. Privatising British Telecom, in particular, helped improve investment in the vital telecommunications sector in the UK. This was progress.

Tim Hunter, Yorkshire

Alternative candidate

I was surprised by the omission of the 2010 result from your piece on Britain's most consequential general elections (*The Conversation*, August). In the wake of its victory, the Conservative party [initially in coalition with the Liberal Democrats] established an approach to governance that in generations to come will surely be remembered for its draconian austerity measures and for facilitating the rise of the 'super rich'. Its largely unchanging ideology oversaw

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➤ Page 40



Public telephone boxes in Covent Garden, London, 1987. Reader Tim Hunter points to British Telecom as one of the era's corporate success stories

the sharpest drop in living standards for decades, and according to some sources the longest squeeze on wages since the Napoleonic Wars.

The cut-throat economic policies pursued during this time and their knock-on effect on services such as the NHS – brought into focus during the pandemic – surely merit a mention in any such discussion.

Oliver Scurrah, Bradford

Going for gold (and other metals)

John Westbrooke (*Letters*, September) points out that gold medals were not awarded to winners before the 1904 Olympics – which raises the issue of how much gold is actually contained in winners' medals.

In 1904 and 1908 they were indeed solid gold, but afterwards that was not the case. Winners' medals at the 1920 Games comprised a silver core with only a thin layer of gold, a trend that continued thereafter. Current International Olympic Committee regulations stipulate that gold medals must normally be at least 92.5 per cent silver and contain a minimum of six grams of gold. In 2008, however, permission was granted for jade to be incorporated in the Beijing medals, and in the Rio and Tokyo Olympics recycled materials were used.

Of course, the value of medals lies in the achievements they represent, not the raw materials they contain. Gold medals usually sell for \$20,000 to \$50,000 at auction, but there are always exceptions: one of Jesse Owens's four medals from Berlin 1936 sold for nearly \$1.47m in 2013.

Ian MacDonald, Essex

US athlete Jesse Owens pictured in the 1950s with the medals he won at the 1936 Summer Olympics. Reader Ian MacDonald notes the value – financially and culturally – of such prizes



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HENRY

A BRUTAL YOUTH

Held hostage at 12. Deciding the fate of captives at 14. Maimed in battle at 16. The future King Henry V learned a series of violent but valuable leadership lessons. **Dan Jones** traces the evolution of 'Prince Hal' into a medieval warrior monarch



Portrait of piety

An oil painting of Henry V from around the turn of the 17th century. The austere, pious image of kingship he portrayed as monarch was influenced by his youthful experiences in the company of Richard II



Unto the breach A 15th-century illustration shows the English triumph at Agincourt in 1415. Henry's military training had begun 15 years earlier

Summer 1403 saw surgeon John Bradmore rush to Kenilworth Castle to attend to a famous patient. Henry, the 16-year-old Prince of Wales and heir to the English throne, was in a critical condition. On 21 July, he had fought alongside his father, King Henry IV, at the battle of Shrewsbury against rebels led by Henry 'Hotspur' Percy.

The royal army had won – but the cost of victory had been high. During the battle, an arrow had pierced Prince Henry's cheek and lodged deep in his head. He'd been lucky to survive; without urgent medical attention, he would surely soon die.

The procedure Bradmore performed on Prince Henry at Kenilworth was a marvel of surgical ingenuity. Over the course of several weeks, the medic widened the entry wound, all the while keeping it clean and free from infection. When the hole in Henry's face was wide enough, Bradmore used a tool of his own devising to grip and slowly remove the metal arrowhead. Miraculously, during this entire process, the prince hadn't gone into toxic shock. Bradmore then closed and sewed up the wound. He'd saved Henry's life.

The operation had been complex and daring. It was also profoundly important for the dynastic history of England, the political history of Britain, and the military history of western Europe.

In 1413, a decade after Bradmore extracted that arrowhead, his patient succeeded to the English throne as King Henry V. Two years later, he was victorious at Agincourt. He was the king who realised the Plantagenet claim to the crown of France. He dragged England out of the dire condition into which it had sunk during the tyrannical reign of Richard II and the fractious one of his own father. He dispensed justice and defended traditional religion. He used the

English language as a tool to bind his subjects as a nation. And he projected a stern, unyielding, ultra-pious public image; indeed, one observer thought him more like a priest than a soldier.

Henry was not the sort of fellow we would choose to govern us today. In recent years, some historians have depicted him as a brutal, stiff-necked prig. But his contemporaries revered and respected him, recognising that – as a medieval monarch – Henry V ticked every box. He ruled for only nine years and five months, but he was England's most accomplished king of the Middle Ages.

Clearly, the surgery that saved Henry after the battle of Shrewsbury was a sliding doors moment in history – but it was far from the only event in his youth that shaped him and, by extension, the realm he ruled. As Shakespeare recognised, to understand King Henry V we must study his experiences as young 'Prince Hal' – beginning with his birth above the gatehouse of Monmouth Castle at 11.22am (reputedly) on 16 September 1386, during the reign of his cousin Richard II.

Reversal of fortunes

"My God! This is a strange and fickle land, which has exiled, slain, destroyed or ruined so many kings... and which is always tainted and toils with strife and variance and envy!" These words, quoted by the chronicler Adam of Usk, were spoken by Richard II in 1399. He was then in the Tower of London, waiting to be deposed and replaced by Henry Bolingbroke – the future Henry IV.

Richard II was no one's idea of a brilliant king – other than, perhaps, his own. He had spent most of his 22-year reign picking fights with his nobles, ignoring good advice and tyrannising his subjects. Yet his influence on the young Henry was powerful, and threefold.

In the first place, Richard had been kind and generous to Henry. When Henry was a boy, one near-contemporary claimed, Richard was fond of telling his courtiers of a prophecy that the lad would one day become king.

The surgery that saved Henry after the battle of Shrewsbury was a sliding doors moment



Hostage to fortune

Richard II knights the young Henry in 1399, depicted in a 15th-century illustration. Richard held Henry hostage but treated him kindly



Was Agincourt Henry's finest hour?

Discover whether the famous battle really deserves its iconic status at historyextra.com/agincourt



Terrible majesty The famous portrait of Richard II hanging in Westminster Abbey, painted in the 1390s, captures his wilfully aloof public image

That prophecy, perhaps just a bit of fun to begin with, looked much more likely after 1398. On 16 September of that year – Henry's 12th birthday – Richard sentenced the boy's father, Bolingbroke, to 10 years in exile following an aborted duel with the Duke of Norfolk. This had its roots in a rebellion against Richard a decade earlier. But it was also the first step towards Richard confiscating the vast duchy of Lancaster, to which Bolingbroke was the heir.

Young Henry did not follow his father into exile. Instead, Richard took him to Ireland on military campaign, effectively held hostage to ensure his father's good behaviour. During this time, though, Richard treated Henry well, even honourably. He knighted the young lad, and praised his "valiant blood".

Even when Bolingbroke invaded England to claim back his inheritance, Richard did not penalise Henry for his father's deeds. True, when Richard sailed back to England to try to secure his crown, he locked his young charge in Trim Castle, north-west of Dublin. But no harm came to Henry there and, from what we can tell, the young man appreciated this point and carried a respectful memory of Richard into his later life. Indeed, one of Henry's early acts as king was to visit Kings Langley in Hertfordshire, where Richard had been buried after he was murdered in 1400. Henry ordered that the king's corpse be exhumed, transported with extraordinary dignity and reburied in the tomb Richard had designed for himself in Westminster Abbey.

Yet Henry gleaned more from watching his captor than simple human empathy. Richard also provided an invaluable counter-example of kingship: he showed exactly how *not* to do the job. Richard was partisan; Henry exercised impartial justice. Richard was allergic to taking good counsel; Henry put consultation with his realm through parliament at the heart of his kingship. Where Richard was inclined towards pro-French pacifism – never a popular stance during the Hundred Years' War – Henry was blisteringly aggressive.

The final part of Richard's legacy to Henry is the most overlooked. Richard had a rare instinct for the performance of majesty that Henry reflected, consciously or unconsciously. The famous Westminster Portrait of Richard captures how he appeared to his courtiers: aloof, terrible and apart. Henry paid tribute to this at his own coronation in 1413. Observers noticed a transformation come over him, so that all hint of levity left him and his manner henceforth became all "gravity and discretion".

Richard loved to perform majesty, and rarely missed an opportunity to do so. Henry thought just as hard about presenting a striking image of what kingship resembled. After his military victories at Harfleur and Agincourt in 1415, he appeared at a triumph in London looking sombre and severe, refusing to celebrate his own achievement but giving all thanks to God. Henry's vision of kingship was austere and pious, whereas Richard's was flamboyant and self-serving – but they both knew precisely what they wanted their subjects to see.

Family business

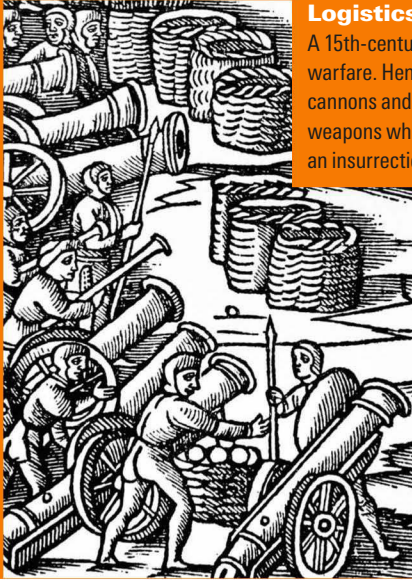
If Richard shaped Henry's understanding of how to 'perform' kingship, the boy's father gave him an unusually good apprenticeship in the military and political business of ruling England. Henry was just 13 when he was created Prince of Wales, straight away becoming actively involved in public affairs and, above all, in warfare.

This vocational training began in 1400, when his father took him on an expedition to Scotland. This mission was not a success, and the Scots ran rings around Henry IV's army. Nevertheless, it gave Prince Henry the chance to see for the first time the immense logistical operation that a military excursion demanded: the tons of flour, salt, wine, beans, fish, cheese and bacon needed to feed the men; the crates of arrows, crossbow bolts, axes, lances, guns and spare pieces of armour



A portrait of Henry IV, a warrior king who took his son, the future Henry V, on military expeditions from the age of about 14

Henry V's brutal youth



Logistics of war

A 15th-century engraving of warfare. Henry learned about cannons and other new weapons while suppressing an insurrection in Wales



Executing orders

The 13th-century towers of Conwy Castle, north Wales. Henry was just 14 when he ordered the execution of captives here

Henry strove physically to embody the heaviness of monarchy

required to equip the army; and the transport and support ships involved, sporting such pious names as *Trinity of the Tower* and *Holy Ghost*.

From that point onwards, barely a year of Henry's youth did not involve some form of warmongering. His main training ground was his principality of Wales, where his father gave him a leading role in the struggle to contain the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr.

That insurrection, which began in 1400 and rumbled on for more than a decade, was a hands-on education covering many aspects of warfare in which Henry would prove a master when he joined the fray of the Hundred Years' War. In Wales there were castles to be besieged, including the vast fortresses at Harlech, Conwy and Aberystwyth. There were archers and men-at-arms to deploy, and new weapons to play with, including rapidly improving cannons.

The prince had to enforce discipline among his own troops and strike fear into the hearts of his enemies. The first time captives were executed on his command was during the siege of Conwy Castle, when Henry was just 14 years old. Perhaps most vital of all, he had to negotiate constantly with his father's treasury and with English parliaments to cadge every penny of war funding he could secure in order to keep his soldiers paid. This was never easy.

Henry clearly had a taste for combat from a very young age. In a letter he wrote in May 1403, when the prince was just 16, he related with proud glee how he had reacted to reports that Glyndŵr was looking to pick a fight.

"We took our men and went to [Glyndŵr's] principal house named Sycharth, where we supposed to find him if he wished to fight in the manner he said," Henry recalled. On arrival, however, "we found no man, and so we set fire to the whole place and several other houses of his tenants around". Captives were beheaded. The countryside was burned.

This was the way of war in the early 15th century, and the young prince didn't shy away from the brutal

reality. When he became king and set his sights on the French crown, this enthusiasm for hyper-aggressive warfare – along with the practical lessons Henry had earlier learned about fighting and financing campaigns – stood him in excellent stead.

Even his near-death experience at Shrewsbury was a learning moment of sorts: he had commanded a division in battle and been badly injured but survived. It might be speculation, but surely not wild fantasy, to suggest that Henry may have concluded from this episode that God had saved him for a reason.

Whether or not this was so, one thing was certain: by the time Henry V succeeded his father, he had undergone an unusually long and intense on-the-job training as a Plantagenet warrior king. Not since Edward I nearly 150 years earlier (see box, right) had any English king come to the throne so well versed in the arts of war.

Riotous youth?

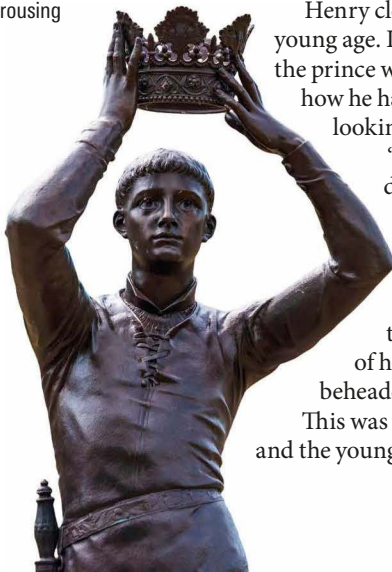
When he inherited his father's crown, Henry V held many advantages besides experience. One of the most crucial was the fact that, unlike Bolingbroke, he did not usurp the throne – he inherited it. The crown was his by right of blood, not conquest – and he did not have kingmakers such as Henry Percy (the powerful magnate of north-east England who had helped the elder Henry depose Richard in 1399) demanding reward for helping him succeed.

This natural privilege might have inclined some young princes towards a sense of lazy entitlement. Indeed, that is part of the popular image of 'Prince Hal'.

No aspect of Henry V's career as prince is so well known as Shakespeare's suggestion, cobbled together from various sources written after Henry's death, that he had enjoyed a riotous youth, spending his time carousing in taverns with low company rather than attending to the serious matter of learning to govern. Shakespeare's Hal is an entertaining, amusing dramatic portrait. It is, though, more or less the opposite of the truth, which is that Prince Henry spent far more time at work than at play.

In 1405, Henry IV became seriously ill with ailments that have never been satisfactorily diagnosed. Contemporaries believed that he had leprosy; modern scholars think he may have suffered a series of strokes. Whatever the cause was, his health became progressively worse.

A bronze statue of Prince Hal in Stratford-upon-Avon. His youth was largely spent learning about warfare and government, not carousing





Shallow Hal Mark Rylance plays Henry V in 1997. Shakespeare's characterisation of 'Prince Hal' as a boisterous drinker is based on unreliable sources

As his father's condition deteriorated, Prince Henry took on greater responsibility for overseeing government. During the crisis years in Wales, he threw himself into suppressing Glyndŵr's rebellion. Subsequently he took a deep interest in the defence of Calais, at the time an English port. In 1410 and 1411 he was almost working as a prince regent, chairing a royal council whose decisions were made with full royal authority. In 1412, his father's health improved and the king demoted Henry, transferring his favour to the prince's brother Thomas, Duke of Clarence. But that proved to be only a brief dip in the grand scheme of Henry's career.

The legend of the idle 'Prince Hal' derives from a combination of oblique poetic references to his sexual habits as a prince and tenuous stories from later writers. One claimed that Henry enjoyed incognito street fighting, another that he kept low company until after his coronation, when he turfed out the bad influences.

None of these tales stand up well to scrutiny. There is sounder evidence for Henry's brothers causing trouble in London's taverns than there is for the future king doing so. Judging by Henry's overall career as prince, he was so heavily immersed in war and government that it is hard to see when he would have found much time or energy for larking around.

When Henry was crowned king of England amid blizzards on 9 April 1413, writers indeed detected a change in his personality as he strove physically to embody the heaviness of monarchy through a new piety and severity of expression. This act was, he seemed to think, an essential part of the theatre of his coronation. Underneath it all, however, there was very little that Henry needed to change about himself. All of the hard work had been done in the 26 years that had led up to that fateful moment. **H**

Dan Jones is a historian, broadcaster and writer. His new book, *Henry V: The Astonishing Rise of England's Greatest Warrior King*, will be published by Apollo in September



Watch a performance of *Henry V* staged at Shakespeare's Globe theatre, originally broadcast on BBC Four, at bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001nrz7/henry-v-from-shakespeares-globe

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APPRENTICE PRINCES

Henry V was far from the first – or last – royal heir to learn the family trade during a turbulent youth

RICHARD I

Lionheart's learning curve

The Lionheart was 31 when he succeeded his father, Henry II, in 1189. By then he was one of the most experienced knights and generals in Europe, and had already established a tempestuous relationship with the French king, Philip II Augustus.

On inheriting the English throne, Richard had a single obsession: he wished to direct all of the resources of the Plantagenet empire towards the fight against Saladin on the Third Crusade. Richard proved to be a famous crusader, but his war – and the vast ransom paid for his release following capture by Duke Leopold of Austria on his way home from the Holy Land – nearly bankrupted his realm.



EDWARD I

A vengeful victor

When Edward was a young man, England was engulfed by a vicious civil war between his father, Henry III, and reformers led by Simon de Montfort. Edward was captured at the battle of Lewes in 1264, but escaped – and took bloody revenge on de Montfort at the battle of Evesham the next year. Edward then travelled to the Holy Land, where he narrowly escaped assassination. When he became king in 1272, at the age of 33, he was hardened by experience to become one of the fiercest warriors in medieval history.



HENRY VI

King of chaos

Ironically, the English monarch with perhaps the worst apprenticeship was Henry V's son, who became king of England – and, theoretically, of France – in 1422, before his first birthday. Compelled to learn every aspect of kingship 'on the job', Henry VI shrank from the task. He was dominated by his relatives and ministers, and had no appetite at all for warfare. His mental health collapsed in the 1450s, and the Wars of the Roses erupted as his reign spiralled into chaos.



Reading the Runes

Mysterious characters inscribed on stone, wood and bone reveal little-known aspects of everyday Viking life. **Eleanor Barraclough** deciphers runes that recount tales of love, lust, travel and tragedy from a millennium ago



The Vikings are best known for their bloody raids, bawdy gods and buried ships. But they are also famous for their runes – the Nordic branch of the spiky north Germanic alphabet still so familiar today. Though Viking Age culture was largely non-literate, runes were the chief exception, lying at the intersection between text and object. In the same way that the word ‘alphabet’ is derived by combining the Greek letters α (alpha) and β (beta), the Nordic equivalent, ‘futhark’, is derived from the first six letters of the writing system: F (f), U (u), Þ (th), A (a), R (r), K (k).

Surprisingly, given that they represent such a recognisable and well-known form of ancient writing, no one knows for certain where runes came from. It’s probably no coincidence that many of the oldest interpretable runic inscriptions discovered – dating from the second century AD – were found in a context that shows evidence of contact with the Roman empire. The shape of runic characters are similar to many letters of the Latin alphabet, but with an angular shape more suited for carving into hard materials such as wood, bone and stone.

It’s likely that knowledge of the Roman writing system travelled north with people who had spent time on both sides of the imperial frontier along the Rhine, whether as mercenaries, traders or craftspeople. This might also explain one possible meaning of the word ‘rune’ itself: something secret or hidden, originally reserved for a particular segment of

society – an elite group. As the centuries passed, though, knowledge and use of runes spanned an ever-broader proportion of society.

The Viking Age is typically considered to encompass roughly the years 750–1100 AD – the period during which people of Scandinavian origins and heritage took part in overseas raiding, trading and settlement. At its height, the Norse diaspora they created stretched from Arctic Greenland in the west to the Eurasian waterways of the east.

Blurred edges

Designating dates for the Viking Age is a useful way to situate ourselves in time. But runes remind us that any historical age rarely has neat edges to mark its beginning and end. Runes were used in the Norse world several centuries before the infamous international raids started, and their use continued for centuries afterwards.

From the intimacies of daily life to the grand sweep of history, runes were used to record lives and deaths, preserving people’s names, their emotions, their humanity. Through them we come within touching distance of the people of the past, with their kaleidoscope of voices, experiences, emotions, relationships and beliefs.

Over the pages that follow we will see how deciphering runes allows us to catch glimpses of five key aspects of Norse culture, spanning the commemoration of death, love and lust, drinking, word games, and the realities of travel in the Viking Age world.



A matter of life and death

Many runestones were carved to mark the passing of beloved individuals, recording details of their lives and travels

The Norse inscriptions most familiar to us today are probably official runestones, typically commissioned to commemorate departed loved ones. If you've passed through Stockholm's Arlanda Airport, you might have walked straight past one such monument. Looming above the bustle of modern-day travellers, this incongruous lump of stone features the fading outline of two carved snakes arching round the edge and looping back on themselves. The bodies of the snakes are adorned with runes that translate as: *Gunnar and Bjorn and Thorgrim raised this stone in memory of their brother Thorstein, who died in the east with Yngvar, and made this bridge.*

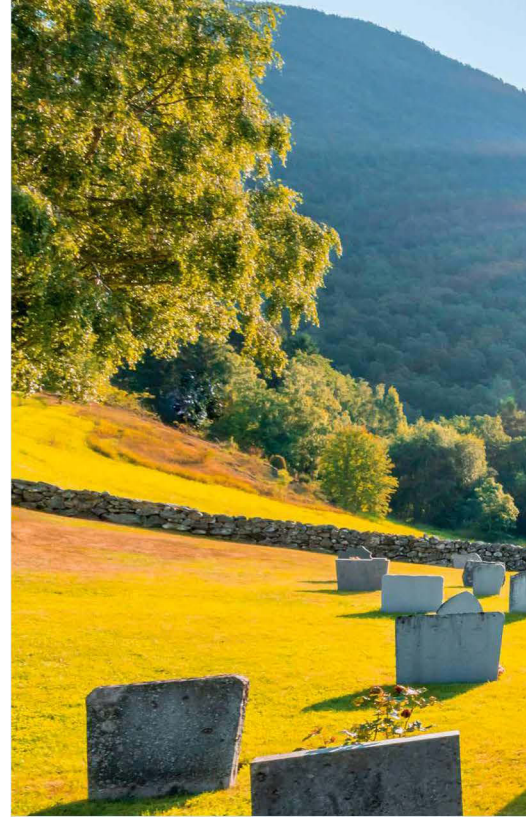
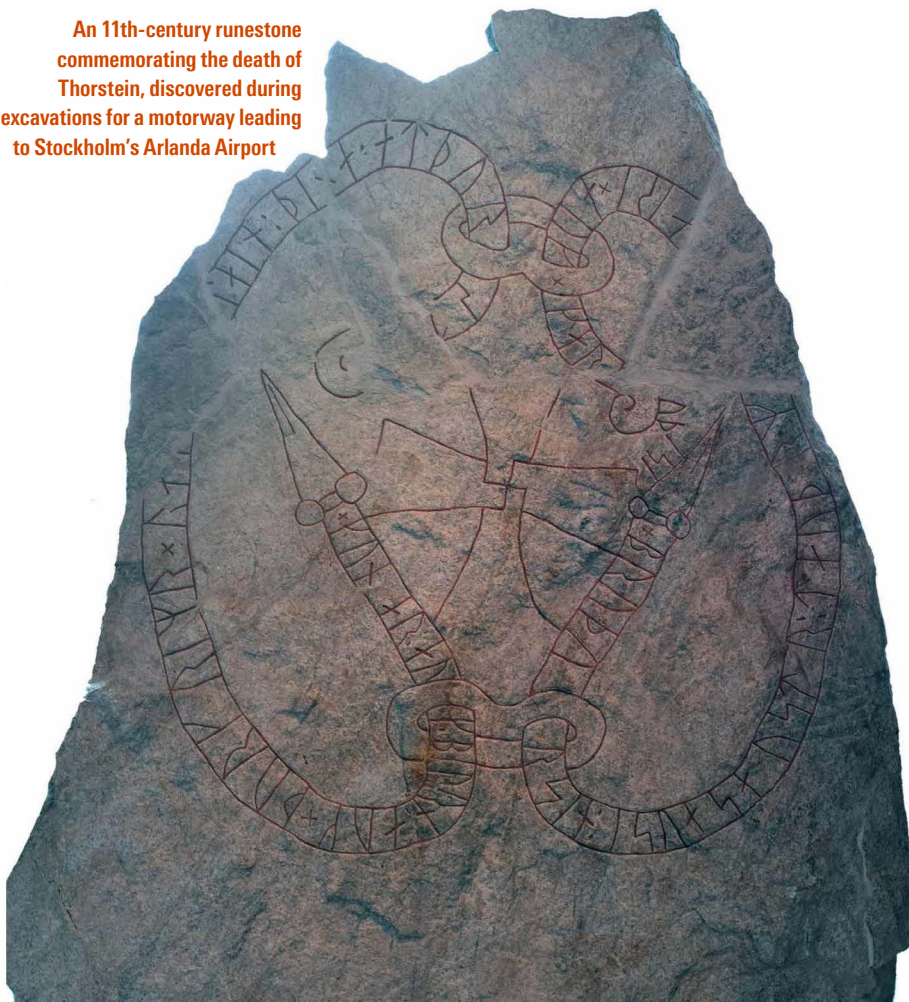
This runestone was originally erected in the mid-11th century alongside a road and the bridge mentioned in the inscription, where it could be admired by travellers passing along the busy route. Commissioning such a stone was an expensive act that

not only commemorated Thorstein's life but also immortalised his three brothers.

The runestone mentions that Thorstein "died in the east with Yngvar". In the region around Lake Mälaren, near Stockholm, are many other runestones that commemorate husbands, fathers, sons and brothers who, like Thorstein, went on that same eastern expedition – possibly in the direction of the Caspian Sea – and never returned.

Some of these runestones still stand where they were erected. Others have been built into the walls of churches and cathedrals. In all, some 20 names survive on various stones: Thorstein, Gunnleif, Harald, Saebjorn, Baggi, Gunnvid, Ulf, Gauti, Belgir, Hrodgeir, Tosti, Hugi, Thorbjorn, Skarf, Skardi, Bjorstein, Osnikin, Orm, Onun and, of course, Yngvar himself. Each runestone is a public testament to private family loss, grief and pride.

An 11th-century runestone commemorating the death of Thorstein, discovered during excavations for a motorway leading to Stockholm's Arlanda Airport



Love letters

Norse people recorded romantic passions and secret desires in runes

Many runic inscriptions from the Norse world were not meant for public consumption. Rather, they were the equivalent of the scrappy sticky notes, everyday text messages and crude toilet graffiti of their time. Written on wood, metal, bone and stone, a number of the surviving messages record strong emotions: loves, lusts, rejections.

Some express fluffy sentiments of the sort that might appear in a packet of Love Hearts or on Valentine's Day cards: "Think of me, I think of you! Love me, I love you!"

Others provide the names of the ones doing the loving and the lusting. Runes on a piece of cow bone from Oslo read: "Asa loves St___", with the latter word broken off after the first two characters. Asa is a woman's name, and St___ is likely the fractured remains of a man's name: Stein or Stefan, perhaps. In this case, Asa's feelings don't seem to be much of a secret, because the final runes on the bone spell out the word *ek uæit* – "I know."

Other runic inscriptions hint at the sort of messy gossip that goes hand in hand with the human condition but which rarely survives for posterity: hints of same-sex acts, affairs, indiscretions and one-night stands. One carver tells us: "The clever woman lets loose



Booze and banter

Runes were used to summon errant husbands – and make crude jokes

The biggest haul of everyday runic inscriptions was found at the medieval harbourside of Bryggen in Bergen, Norway. There were nearly 700 at latest count, most inscribed on little sticks discovered by archaeologists after some of the wooden buildings were destroyed by fire in the 1950s.

One, etched by a woman named Gyda around AD 1200, reads: ᚷᛞᛦᚱ᛫ᚢᚾᚩᚱᛡᚵᛦᚳᚰᛦᚴᛁᛞᛡ – transliterated into Roman letters as *gya : sæhir : at þu : kak hæim*. In English, that roughly translates as: “Gyda says that you should go home.” Judging from where the stick was found, it seems likely that Gyda sent the message to her husband at the tavern, telling him to finish up his drink and come home. On the other side of the stick are a flurry of indecipherable runes – perhaps a reply to Gyda carved by a husband too drunk to hold his knife steady.

Other runic inscriptions found in Bergen also bear the hallmarks of inebriation. One carved into a wooden handle reads: “If only I might come nearer to the mead-house much more often.” Elsewhere, a cow bone was scored with runes that proclaim: “Now there’s going to be a fight,” followed by an undecipherable reply in another hand – perhaps scratched by a couple of drinkers about to witness a noisy punch-up, one of them too inebriated to carve a coherent sentence.

Other inscriptions tell us that medieval Scandinavians could be as immature as the rest of us. We can almost hear sniggering across the centuries as someone takes up their knife to carve: "Sit down and interpret the runes, stand up and fart." And from toilet-based humour it's only ever a hop, skip and jump to genital-based jokes. One line of alliterative poetry carved onto a length of wood might be translated as: "The vagina is lovely, may the penis serve it a drink." Like all groundbreaking forms of technology, humans found a way to make it about bums and boobs.



A figure with a drinking horn on a carved stone from Gotland, Sweden



ABOVE: The 12th-century Urnes stave church in Norway, where a runestick was found hinting at a priest's passion

RIGHT: The bronze Rällinge statuette possibly depicts the god Freyr with an erect penis



for her lover, but folk still think she's a virgin." Another remembers the good times: "Ingibjorg loved me when I was in Stavanger." Another spills the beans: "Clumsy-Kari and Vilhjalm's wife are shackled up together."

Some tell of people who have been unhappily friend-zoned: “I love another man’s wife so much that fire seems cold to me, and I am a friend of this woman.” Others hint at rejection or love affairs gone sour. One such, a 10th-century square weaving tablet made from bone, found in Lund (then in Denmark, now in Sweden), provides two out of three names in what appears to be a love triangle: Sigvor (female) and Ingimarr (male). The unnamed carver of the runes is most likely female, and the runes appear to form a curse, directed particularly at Ingimarr: the translatable part reads “Sigvor’s Ingimarr will have my weeping!”

Holy passions

With their dark timbered walls and sloping shingled roofs topped with dragon heads, Norwegian stave churches are atmospheric places to visit. Several runic messages that were hidden in them and latterly rediscovered tell us that private passions also burned in these holy houses. A wooden runestick found in Urnes stave church at Soan og Fjordane in south

central Norway declares: "Arni the priest wants to have Inga." Whether this was a confession by Arni himself or a scurrilous rumour started by a member of the congregation, we can't know.

Another stick, found in Lom stave church in the same part of Norway, was inscribed by a man called Havard to a woman identified only by the first letters of her name, possibly Gudny or Gunnhild. He is proposing marriage – but it seems that he’s not her only option, because “it is my full desire to ask for you” is followed by “...if you don’t want to be with Kolbein”.

Someone has attempted to conceal the identities of the people involved by scratching out the three names in this potential love triangle and dropping the wooden runestick surreptitiously between the church's floorboards. Gudny/Gunnhild herself is a possible culprit – the wooden stick was found in the area of the church where women sat for mass – but we can only guess at the emotions that were going through their head at the time.



A Viking Age runestone from Gotland, Sweden, believed to depict the gods Thor, Freyr and Odin who, according to myth, introduced poetry – a favourite Norse pastime



Playing with words

Norse people enjoyed composing poetry and inventing linguistic games to help pass the time

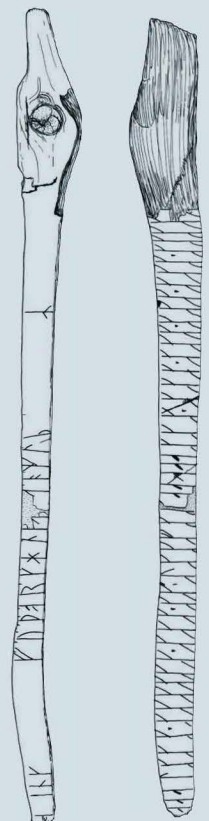
Wordplay, poems and brain teasers were beloved by people across all strata of Norse society. It's relatively rare to find evidence of these preserved in runes because such verbal games were predominantly oral rather than written. But some surviving runes reveal the diverse ways those living across the Norse world amused themselves.

One runestick dating from c985–1025 in the earliest decades of the settlement in Greenland, for example, tells us something about the sort of wordplay enjoyed by those who lived in the farthest-flung Norse communities.

The stick involved is a four-sided piece of pinewood around 43cm long, with a natural knot at one end that resembles a birdlike creature. It was discovered in 1953 by someone from the town of Narsaq who, while foraging for good-quality mud and soil

for gardening, found themselves digging in what had been the living room of one of the earliest Norse farms. Runes are inscribed on four sides of the stick. On one side, transliterated into the Roman alphabet, the runes read: *o : sa : sa : sa : is : o sa : sat*. Several interpretations of these runes have been suggested, with variations along the lines of "On a tub saw the person, who sat on a tub," or "On the sea that seemed to be, which you did not see on the sea."

Whatever the correct interpretation – and perhaps there was never meant to be just one – this is a fascinating example of wordplay using homonyms: words that have the same spelling or pronunciation but different meanings. There are many examples of this in modern Nordic languages, one being the Icelandic sentence *Afi á Á á á á á*: "Grandpa from Á [a place] has a sheep by a river."



An illustration of a runestick discovered in Greenland, carved around the turn of the 11th century, revealing a Norse love of wordplay



To distant lands

Items carved with runes provide evidence of the travels of Norse folk during the Viking Age



A carved head on the Oseberg wagon, discovered in an early ninth-century ship burial in Norway – one of the most spectacular finds from the Viking Age

The example of runic wordplay from Norse Greenland given earlier, with its allusions to the sea, reminds us that this was a culture predicated on travel, both on land and on water. Other little scraps of runic inscriptions occasionally provide the names of ordinary individuals who travelled extraordinary distances, sometimes under extraordinary circumstances.

One of these inscriptions was found in a wooden coffin in the Norse graveyard of Herjolfsnes, close to the southernmost tip of Greenland. The coffin contained no body, only a wooden stick carved with runes that read: "This woman, who was called Gudveig, was laid overboard in the Greenland Sea." She died on the voyage west, it seems, so this was as close to a burial as she could be given.

Another example was discovered near the high pass of Lendbreen, in the mountains of south central Norway. This pass lay on an ancient highway – a track along which farming families moved up to and down from their summer pastures, as well as a route used by traders and long-distance travellers bound for other parts of the country and even across the sea.

As climate change bites, glacial archaeologists are racing to recover ephemera that were preserved here in ice for the past millennium. An extraordinary range of artefacts has been discovered, including farming equipment, a woollen mitten, a lot of frozen horse poo – and a relic revealing the name of at least one of the travellers who used this route during the Viking Age. Carved onto a wooden walking stick around AD 1000 are runes that read: "Ivar owns this." Wherever Ivar was heading, he had to reach his destination unaided by his stick – which lay frozen in ice for the next thousand years. **H**

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Eleanor Barraclough is a broadcaster, writer and historian based at Bath Spa University. Her new book, *Embers of the Hands: Hidden Histories of the Viking Age*, will be published by Profile in September



Listen to Eleanor Barraclough discussing runes and Viking Age music in an episode of BBC Radio 3's **Sunday Feature** via BBC Sounds: [bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0020y90](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0020y90)



Herjolfsnes in southern Greenland, site of a Norse settlement established in the late 10th century



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Tinderbox A German armoured vehicle nears a burning Soviet truck during the Second World War. From Neolithic massacres to cyber-conflicts, “warfare has become completely embedded in the human past”

What drives our addiction to war?

Conflict has been a constant of the human experience for millennia. The question that continues to trouble historians is: why?

BY **RICHARD OVERY**

Why war? Albert Einstein posed this question to the psychologist Sigmund Freud in a series of letters sent in 1932, at the prompting of the League of Nations Institute for Intellectual

Cooperation. He was disappointed with the answer. Freud told him that all animals – humans included – possessed a destructive “death drive” that could explain why they fought and why they would continue to do so. Since that exchange, many of the world’s brightest minds have sought an answer that explains our propensity for collective violence – both over the millennia of recorded history and in all parts of the globe.

This line of thought prompts two more questions. What *is* warfare? And for how long have we been fighting wars? These points have, unsurprisingly, sparked major disagreements.

Historians and social scientists have tended to define war as something that is a product of the state as an entity. They have been fought in periods when, and in places where, they could be planned, armies raised and resources paid for – in other words, over the past 4,000–5,000 years in areas where states emerged. Any violence below the level of the state is not warfare but, rather, feuding or raiding or ritual contests.

Evolutionary biologists and psychologists, on the other hand, see the emergence of warfare as having occurred much deeper in the human past, when small groups of hunter-gatherers or fishers competed for food or resources

and fought to protect their kin. Warfare in this early environment was almost certainly sporadic and brief, albeit potentially deadly, and has influenced behaviours into the modern era.

Cultural anthropologists have also suggested that warfare evolved before the state, both in the remote past and among tribal communities more recently. It was waged by pre-state peoples in a variety of ways – from ritual stand-offs to full-scale massacres – and was, in many cases, reinforced by a prevailing culture that endorsed violence when necessary and prompted

the evolution of a warrior class and militaristic values that glorified war.

There are many examples of warfare among peoples who lacked state structures but fought from a variety of motives – over resources, land, booty and vengeance. The Māori fought with extreme violence among themselves to protect food supplies stored in special silos known as *pa*. Tribal chiefdoms in Neolithic Europe fought regular engagements against encroaching tribes or to safeguard trade.

In North America, too, tribal conflict often led to extreme violence. Take the massacre perpetrated in the first millennium AD in southern Utah. The skeletons of 92 victims, mostly male, were found at Wetherill’s Cave, displaying evidence that they had been bludgeoned to death, scalped and decapitated

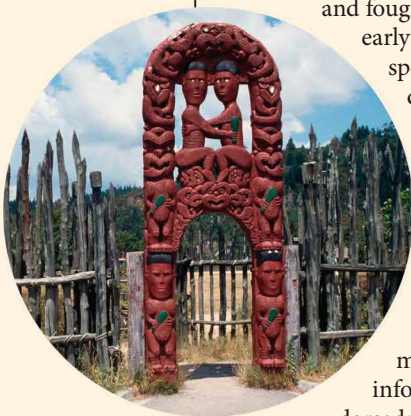
Such bloodletting was not the same as modern organised war, but it is difficult to see the pre-state past as peaceable, given everything we now know about collective, warlike conflict. Evidence for this stage of ‘emergent warfare’ has been found in the archaeological record in the form of weapons, fortifications, iconography and skeletal remains scarred by bone damage indicating violence. At Talheim in Germany’s Neckar Valley, marks on the excavated remains of 32 men, women and children who lived around 7,000 years ago suggest that they fell victim to attack by axes, clubs and arrowheads. The examination of Paleoamerican skeletons from between 8,000 and 7,000 years ago has revealed that more than half met a violent death.

Clearly, humans have been fighting each other since long before the emergence of the state. But this fact reveals little about *why*. We are far more belligerent than any other species, and have evidently evolved that belligerence as one means of survival in the face of factors such as competition from other humans and ecological shocks. In short, warfare has become completely embedded in the human past.

But wars are not all the same, even if they are rooted in common causes. To make sense of the bewildering number of conflicts in the recorded past, certain recurring motives can be found: the need for resources; the imperatives of belief or ideology; the pursuit of power; and last, but by no means least, the search for security.

The quest for, or protection of, resources has a long pedigree. Whether the aim was to preserve a hunting ground from trespassers, or to claim additional land, or to capture slaves, or to leverage payment of tribute, resource wars are identifiable. In many cases, ecological shifts caused by climatic change, overhunting or population growth have prompted the violent pursuit of resources. The pressure of nomadic tribes on the northern Chinese frontier 2,000 years ago was driven in part by sudden climate shocks that reduced pasture land. And a prolonged drought in central North America in the late 13th century triggered waves of bloodshed as tribes struggled to find food in an arid land.

In the modern age, the drive to secure resources has been less obviously the primary motive behind acts of



The entrance to the site of a Māori fortified village. Polynesian tribes fought brutal battles over food supplies



Why peace is out of the ordinary

Margaret MacMillan offers her take on our compulsion to wage war, at historyextra.com/macmillan-war



Valley of death The remains of some of the 32 men, women and children found in a mass grave in the Neckar Valley. These Neolithic people were killed using axes, clubs and arrows

war. However, there is one notable exception to this rule: the Second World War. German aggression against the Soviet Union in summer 1941, and Japanese attacks on the US and on the British and Dutch empires later the same year, were unquestionably propelled by a thirst for material resources and land.

“What one does not have, but needs, one must conquer,” announced Adolf Hitler shortly before his troops invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. That summer and autumn, he sparred with his generals, insisting – against their instincts – that German forces should first seize the coalfields and other rich assets of the Donbas rather than focusing on the capture of Moscow; their 1942 campaign was also intended to claim the oil and other resources of the southern Soviet Union. These would be needed if Germany were to become an economic superpower capable of holding off or defeating the British empire and the US.

Japan’s leaders also saw resources as vital to their war effort in China and their ambitions to be a major power. It was this imperative that drove their decision to launch the Pacific War. This, they hoped, would provide them with the material resources – the oil and minerals of south-east Asia – necessary to prevail over the western powers.

Religion has also proven a powerful driver of conflict over the centuries. But should it be taken seriously as a cause in its own right? Or does it often, in fact, mask social and economic motives? Historians have debated these questions for centuries – and when they have, the medieval crusades launched by Christian powers against the so-called ‘infidel’ have rarely been far from their minds. Though some historians have contended that economic gain and local power were the crusading knights’ true goals, it could be argued that this conclusion is a product of the outcome of these campaigns, rather than their cause.

Pope Urban II’s 1095 call for Christians to capture the Holy Land – and, in doing so, to win redemption from sins – was answered by thousands of people, both rich and poor. They overcame unimaginably harsh conditions to conquer Jerusalem in 1099, where they slaughtered the city’s Muslim and Jewish inhabitants. Only belief made sense of the campaign and the contest

“More than half of Paleoamerican skeletons dating from between 8,000 and 7,000 years ago met a violent death



Blood money? The crusaders capture Jerusalem in 1099, as depicted in a 13th-century manuscript. Historians continue to debate whether the crusades were driven by religious zeal or economic greed

to hold onto the new crusader kingdoms in the east. Belief also prompted Islamic leaders to unite in order to drive out the crusaders, with the promise of paradise for those who died fighting for the cause; by the end of the 13th century that campaign was complete.

The call to *jihād* – war in defence of Islam – has been revived in recent years, with strong echoes of a much earlier rhetoric. Longstanding Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s recent claim that Jerusalem will again be in Muslim hands echoes the 12th-century campaign to recapture the city from Christian control. Belief, then, is not so easy to dismiss as a cause of war.

On the face of it, the link between war and the pursuit of power appears far less controversial. Few would argue with the contention that the quest for authority and control over others has always been a prime driver of conflict. Yet even this conclusion runs into problems, because people seldom fight for power for its own sake. Rather, conflict aims to gain power *for* something:

“Even after war had ended his career, Napoleon believed he could have been the ‘greatest man that ever lived’

seizing land, demanding tribute, controlling resources, enhancing security and satisfying honour. Military power may be the means to achieve these aims, but it is the instrument rather than the cause.

However, there can be little doubt that the desire for power was the motor that propelled some of history’s most famous (or infamous) figures – Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Napoleon Bonaparte and Hitler – along the road to conflict and conquest. Whatever else drove these individuals to wage war, an insatiable appetite for personal power was clearly central.

Napoleon was a classic case. Relentlessly driven to rise above the ordinary, he embarked on a military career at a young age. “The only thing to do in this world,” he told his brother Joseph in 1794, at the age of about 25, “is to keep acquiring... power and more power. All the rest is meaningless.” Power for him was bound up with military success, which meant dominating as much of Europe as he could. And power brought with it a popular cult of Napoleon as saviour and ruler. ‘Saint Napoleon’ or ‘Napoleon the Great’ were epithets wielded to enhance his status.

Napoleon could brook no opposition to his power, which explains the constant conflicts in central Europe, Spain and, eventually, Russia, where his ambition reached its limit. The pursuit of power made possible other achievements, but it was also the sign of a man who didn’t know where to stop. That thirst for power warped Napoleon’s thinking even while he was incarcerated on the island of St Helena. Here, during his final exile, the vanquished French emperor claimed that, if he had succeeded in Russia, he would have been “the greatest man that ever lived”.

Power and religious faith may have sparked numerous conflicts down the centuries, but the quest for security is surely the most common motive in all of recorded history for waging war. Modern security studies were born in the aftermath of the Second World War, and security of all kinds has become something of a modern obsession. But security as an ambition has a much longer pedigree.

English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, writing in the 17th century, saw the defence of frontiers by a permanent “posture of Warre” as essential for security in the absence of a power to enforce peace and the lack of sufficient trust in others. The anarchic nature of the international order is a major argument for why modern states must stay armed and prepared, even when there are institutional or legal constraints on resort to war, or a strong desire for peace.

Linked to this, frontiers or borders have long been flash-points. Indeed, most wars in the modern age have been fought between neighbours, and very often over issues of security around a frontier. This is true today of the current conflict in Gaza and also of the Russia-Ukraine war, which was launched – or so Russian leaders claim – in order to

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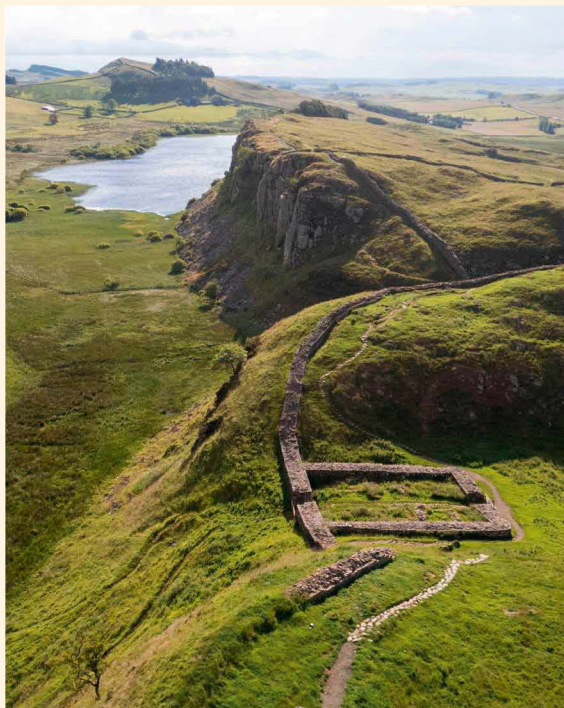
Broken leader Napoleon Bonaparte retreats from Moscow, as depicted in a painting from 1851. The French leader is the classic example of a man driven to wage war by a lust for power, says Richard Overy

create a secure frontier against what Moscow sees as the menace to security posed by Nato. But it was also true of the Roman empire, whose long frontier, though seldom fixed in the way most of today's borders are, had to be defended against a host of potential enemies to preserve the security of imperial territory.

Rome's frontier was a constant source of friction and war. It stretched over 5,000 miles around western Europe, the Middle East and north Africa, extending from Britain in the north to the Sahara in the south, and from Spain in the west to areas beyond Palestine in the east. This border was porous, though great efforts were made to install watchtowers or outposts along its length in order to monitor entry and to safeguard against violent incursions.

Hadrian's Wall – the *Vallum Aelium* – is arguably the best-known example, constructed in an effort to keep the tribes of the Caledonians and Maeatae at arm's length from the Roman province of Britannia. The wall was connected by roadways to garrisons farther south, so that reinforcements could be rapidly marched in, and forts and watchtowers were set along its 73-mile length. At least 11 major raids by Celtic tribes were recorded between AD 160 and 400, but the wall served its purpose – preserving the security of the provincial territory.

By the fourth century AD, most Roman soldiers were stationed along the frontiers in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and the primary endeavour of the empire



Ancient border force One of the 80 original milecastles that defended Hadrian's Wall, evidence that the Romans prized their frontier security, just as nation states do today

was frontier security – until it was overwhelmed by the tribal federations driven from Eurasia into the Roman heartland.

Some historians assert that, over the 16 centuries since the fall of Rome, the global order has become more peaceable. However, that argument has been thoroughly undermined by the fact that the 20th century witnessed the two largest and deadliest wars in human history. Indeed, there has not been a single year in the 20th or 21st centuries when a war of some kind – state-on-state war, insurgency and counter-insurgency, civil war or resource war – was not being fought. Warfare is embedded in the way modern states think about their security, and that security seems once again at serious risk in the 2020s, as it was in the 1930s.

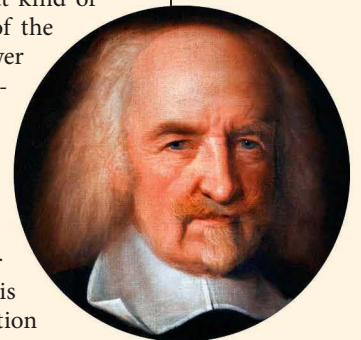
Today, war is not just history, and much academic effort has been devoted to assessing what kind of conflicts will emerge over the course of the current century. The concept of Power Transition Theory, developed by international relations experts during the Cold War, suggests that a challenge to a hegemonic power by a rising power creates the danger of war, either to defend a waning hegemony or to elevate the challenger. It's proposed that a potential war between China and the US would fit this pattern, though it remains a speculation impossible to predict with certainty.

More likely sources of conflict are the shrinking availability of resources – oil being a key example – and competition for their control. This is being exacerbated by the effects of climatic change, as climate shocks undermine resource availability – notably of water – or precipitate mass migrations in affected regions.

Cyberwar or war in space have also become potential arenas of conflict as militaries have come to rely on sophisticated electronic communication. Over the past 15 years, America has activated US Cyber Command and US Space Force to beef up its defences against new threats – and to enable it to launch counterattacks.

These initiatives, and the long history of human belligerence that preceded them, suggests that we shouldn't anticipate a warless world in anything but the remotest future. War first emerged in the archaic past, evolving through the stages of village, tribe, tribal federation, state and empire into a universal phenomenon. As to why it did so? Well, there's no single answer to that – much as Einstein might have wished for one. **H**

“There has not been a single year in the 20th or 21st centuries when a war of some kind was not being fought



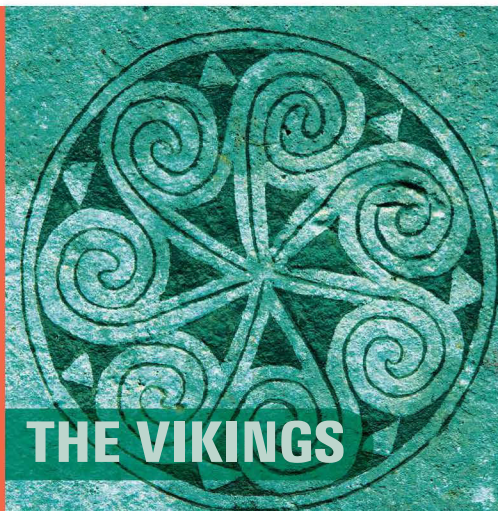
Thomas Hobbes argued in the 17th century that, to preserve its security, a state had to be in a permanent “posture of war”

.....
Richard Overy is honorary research professor at the University of Exeter. His new book, *Why War?*, was published by Pelican in June

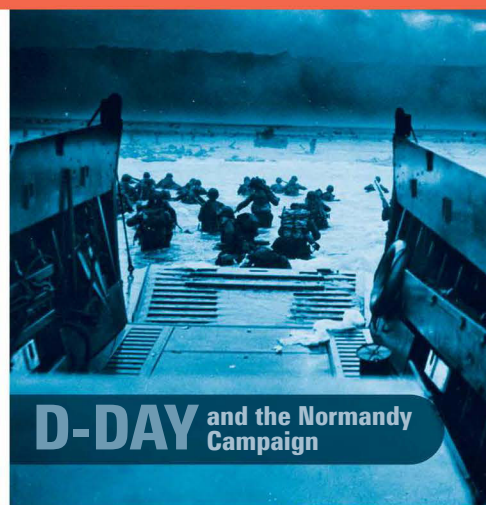
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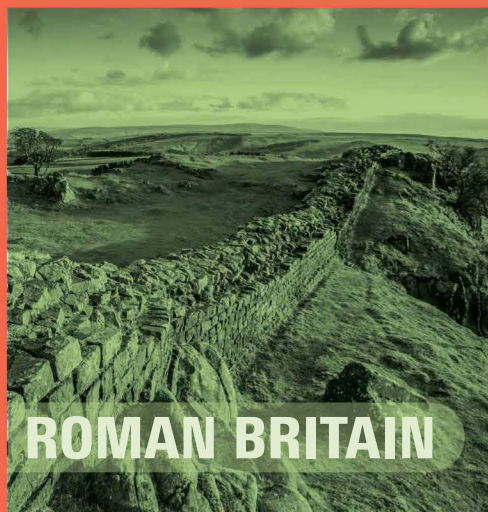
THE VIKINGS



D-DAY and the Normandy Campaign



THE REGENCY



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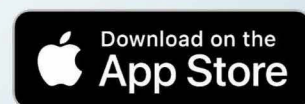
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BBC **HiSTORY** MAGAZINE

Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

Did a medieval monk really fly?

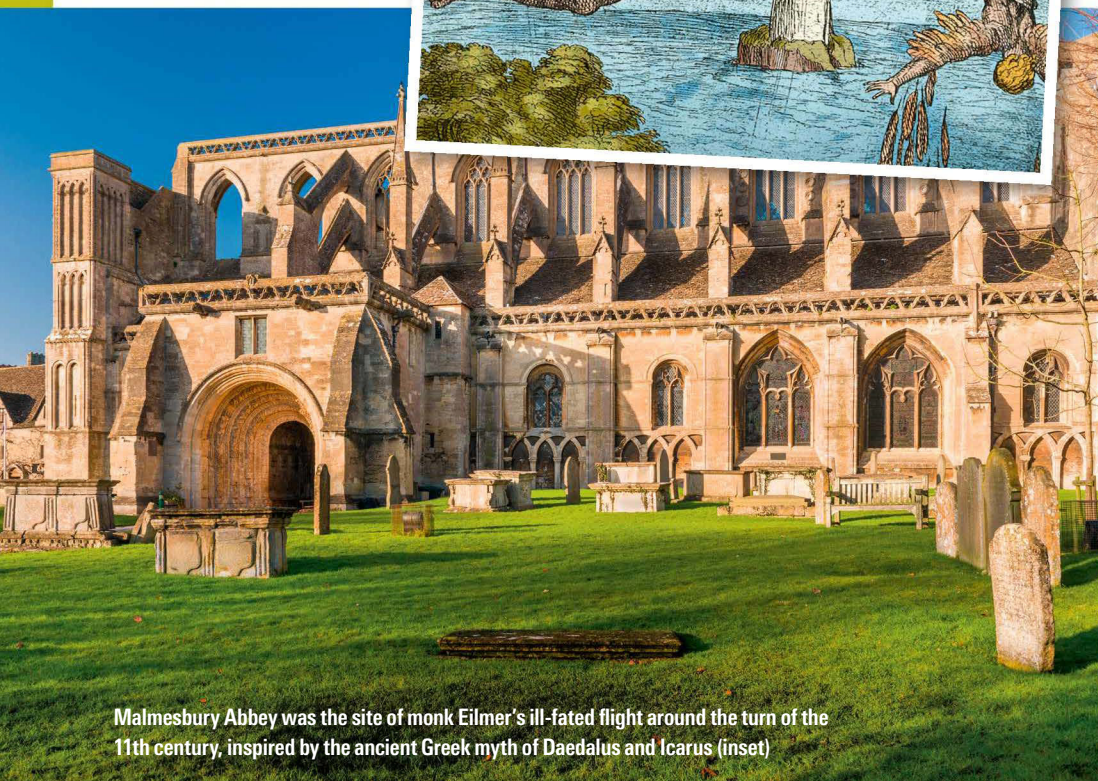
»» Born in the late 10th century, Eilmer of Malmesbury was an English Benedictine monk famous for one of the earliest recorded attempts at human flight. Only sparse details of his life survive, in a passage from William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, written around 1125. But it seems that, inspired by the Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus, Eilmer built a set of 'wings' and leapt from a tower at Malmesbury Abbey. He glided briefly – before a gust of wind sent him crashing to the ground, breaking both his legs and, according to William's text, leaving him "lame ever after".

Modern analysis suggests that Eilmer's flight was indeed feasible. Assuming he set off into a south-west-erly wind, he would have

been borne aloft for a few seconds by air currents rolling off surrounding hills.

We don't know the exact date of Eilmer's flight, but it's estimated to have taken place between 995 and 1010. His legacy endures in Malmesbury; though the long-running Flying Monk inn closed in the 1980s, a brewery named in his honour recently launched nearby.

.....
Danny Bird, content producer,
BBC History Magazine



Malmesbury Abbey was the site of monk Eilmer's ill-fated flight around the turn of the 11th century, inspired by the ancient Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus (inset)



A mural of the *Clotilda* in Mobile, Alabama commemorates that ship's transatlantic voyage transporting enslaved African people in 1860

When did the last ship transporting enslaved people sail to the US?

»» The last ship known to have transported enslaved Africans to the US was the *Clotilda*, which docked in secrecy in Mobile Bay, Alabama in July 1860 – nine months before the country was engulfed by a civil war caused by arguments about slavery.

Laws banning the slave trade were enacted in Britain and the US in 1807 and 1808, respectively. However, the illegal supply to Brazil and Cuba continued, and more than a quarter of the estimated 12.5 million victims were forced onto slave ships after 1808.

The *Clotilda's* voyage was planned after a bet was made that enslaved people could still be smuggled into the US, but was also part of a campaign to reopen the US slave trade. Having landed 103 Africans, the *Clotilda* was burned and scuttled to destroy evidence of the crime; none of the participants were ever successfully prosecuted.

The survivors endured five years of slavery before they were freed by the Union Army. They established their own community, Africatown; befriended future civil rights leaders; and called for reparations. The *Clotilda's* last survivor, Matilda McCrear, died in Selma, Alabama in 1940.

.....
Hannah Durkin, author of *Survivors: The Lost Stories of the Last Captives of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (William Collins, 2024)



Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev pounds his fist at the UN General Assembly on 23 September 1960. Did he later also thump his shoe?

Did Khrushchev wield his shoe at the UN?

►► Like Stalin before him, Nikita Khrushchev considered the United Nations to be perpetually working in favour of the capitalist powers, with the interests of the communist camp and the developing world repeatedly sidelined. Determined that the Soviet Union should get to have its say on a host of questions – including proposals for the reform of UN structures, and a historic motion demanding an end to colonialism – Khrushchev decided to force the issue by going to New York himself for the General Assembly in autumn 1960.

There, he bellowed interviews from the balcony of the Soviet mission to journalists in the street below, shaking his fist as passing motorists honked their horns. He also raced across New York – leaving traffic chaos in his wake – for an impromptu meeting with Fidel Castro in a down-at-heel Harlem hotel.

At the UN, he relentlessly courted leaders from newly independent countries in Africa and Asia, and engaged in explosive tirades against US president Dwight Eisenhower and UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld. Most infamously, on 12 October he got into an especially heated exchange with Filipino delegate Lorenzo Sumulong, and apparently grew so enraged that he removed his shoe and pounded it furiously on the desk in front of him.

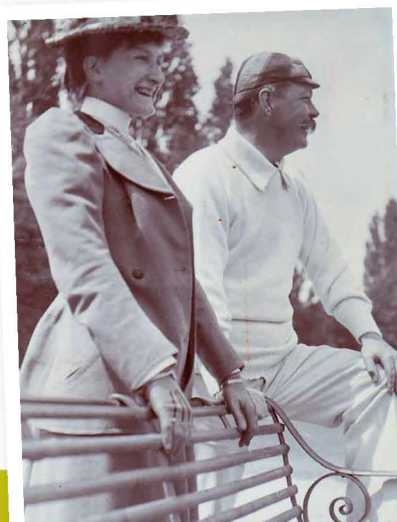
Without doubt, the famous photograph usually associated with the

episode is a fake – and a rather crude one at that. There is also no footage to corroborate such remarkably unstatesmanlike conduct from the Soviet leader.

Nonetheless, Khrushchev was wholly capable of unpredictable and sometimes outlandish behaviour, as his 1959 confrontation with US vice-president Richard Nixon in Moscow had demonstrated. In addition, members of the Soviet delegation have since confirmed that the legendary shoe-thumping moment did occur. Interpreter Viktor Sukhodrev recalled that Khrushchev had first pounded his fists on the table and stamped his feet in protest at Sumulong's criticism of Soviet foreign policy. Then, growing frustrated that the sound of his stamping was muffled by the thick carpet, he removed his shoe to more forcefully make his point.

Another member of the Soviet party later wrote that Khrushchev initially seemed quite proud of himself after the incident – before realising that his allies were mortified by the performance, and his enemies overjoyed at his making a fool of himself on the world stage.

.....
Dr Robert Hornsby, associate professor of modern European history, University of Leeds



DID YOU KNOW...?

Avian appetite

Charles Darwin once ate an owl. While a student at Cambridge, he was a member of the Glutton Club dedicated to the eating of "strange flesh". An owl, a bittern and a hawk were among the creatures sampled by its members. Darwin's taste for unusual meat continued during his famous voyage on the *Beagle* in the 1830s. He tucked into puma, armadillo and a large, unnamed rodent, which he described as having "the best meat I ever tasted".



Pyramid scheme

In 1829, an architect drew up plans for a gargantuan pyramid to stand on Primrose Hill in north London. At the time, the capital's churchyards and burial grounds were struggling to accommodate the soaring numbers of citizens dying each year. Thomas Willson claimed that his Egypt-inspired 94-storey necropolis would be able to hold some 5 million corpses. His plan proved too ambitious for the early 19th century, though, and his giant pyramid never got beyond the drawing board.

Grace in defeat

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, played 10 first-class cricket matches – but his proudest moment came in August 1900, when he took the wicket of WG Grace. The bushy bearded sporting legend had already scored 110 runs before Doyle bowled a ball – which the great man edged into the wicketkeeper's gloves. The author published a poem about his achievement 22 years later, writing: "One day I shall ever recall [when] I captured that glorious wicket."

.....
Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history

Arthur Conan Doyle, pictured during a cricket match in 1901

WHY DO WE SAY...

...as mad as a hatter?

►► Most know this idiom, largely thanks to the character in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. However, Lewis Carroll, whose most famous book was published in 1865, did not invent the simile. It first occurred in print in 1829 and soon spread, with the result that, by the time *Alice* appeared, everybody understood it.

Real-life mad hatters have been identified from history, but no one has been able to establish a direct connection between them and the idiom as introduced. Attempts to trace the phrase to French, or to account for it as a garbled version of some other English regional (or Irish, or Scottish) phrase, have been either unsuccessful or fanciful. Some suggested that it refers to reputedly widespread alcoholism (the phrase 'drunk as a hatter' was also used). Though this sounds reasonable, no one has shown that hatters drank

more (or were more prone to madness) than any other artisans.

It remains equally unclear whether mercury poisoning, from exposure to mercuric nitrate during the production of felt, caused hatters' madness on such a large scale (again, assuming that many hatters were indeed mad). In any case, this seemingly convincing explanation did not occur to anyone in the 19th century.

In 1901, a correspondent to the popular periodical *Notes and Queries* asked: "Does a mad hatter make mad-caps?" If so, then not a mad hatter but a mad-hat maker!



Anatoly Liberman, professor and author of *An Analytic Dictionary of English Etymology* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008)



A cartoon of renowned French author Émile Zola, whose 1898 open letter 'J'Accuse...!' popularised the word 'intellectual'

How did the word 'intellectual' become common parlance?

►► Though coined by the Middle Ages, if not earlier, the word only became used widely during the Dreyfus Affair of the 1890s. This political scandal centred on the case of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish French army officer falsely accused of passing military secrets to Germany.

Prominent author Émile Zola popularised the term when he famously denounced the country's military top brass for presiding over such an elaborate conspiracy and a gross miscarriage of justice fuelled by antisemitism. Zola's celebrated 1898 open letter 'J'Accuse...!' rallied widespread public defence of Dreyfus. These 'Dreyfusards' were characterised by their commitment to justice, reason and liberty – the lifeblood of French republicanism.

Before the Dreyfus Affair, which began in 1894 and dragged on until 1906, the word 'intellectual' was used more generally to describe someone engaged in scholarship. However, the Dreyfusards' vocal opposition to the injustices of the case gave the term a distinct social and political connotation, identifying those who apply their intellect and knowledge to critique society and advocate for change. It also gave rise to a backlash among anti-Dreyfusards who perceived intellectuals as unpatriotic know-it-alls. **DB**



ILLUSTRATION BY GLEN McBETH



Thirteenth-century tiles from Chertsey Abbey, Surrey depict Richard the Lionheart (left) and Saladin – though, tellingly, not in the same image

Did Richard the Lionheart and Saladin ever meet?

»» These two martial leaders are inextricably linked through the pivotal roles they played in the Third Crusade (1189–92). As well as warfare, diplomacy was a key facet of the crusade, so the English king wanted to meet the sultan of Egypt and Syria soon after he arrived in the Holy Land. Saladin declined, though, declaring that “kings do not meet unless an agreement has been reached. It is not good for them to fight after meeting and eating together.” Instead, he sent his

brother Saphadin to conduct multiple rounds of negotiations.

Intriguingly, Richard and Saphadin enjoyed good relations, sharing a love of music, food and hunting – while also assessing each other’s strengths and weaknesses. When the crusade ended in failure for the Christians, many of Saladin’s emirs wanted to meet Richard in person. Likewise, some of the crusaders visited Saladin in Jerusalem, and found him as charismatic as his reputation

suggested. But Richard himself would not visit the holy city without achieving victory.

Over the centuries, various writers have imagined the two men together, sometimes in a joust. In Walter Scott’s 1825 novel *The Talisman*, Saladin sneaks into Richard’s tent to cure him of illness. In reality, they never met.

.....
Jonathan Phillips, professor of crusading history, Royal Holloway, University of London



Liberal Party leader David Lloyd George, pictured c1918 – around the time his ‘coupon coalition’ won the UK general election

What was the Coupon Election of 1918?

»» The long-overdue UK general election held at the end of the First World War was one of the most momentous in British history.

By then, all men over 21 could vote, as could women over 30, subject to educational and property requirements. Nationalist candidates were returned in most of Ireland, paving the way for a war of independence, and partition. The election also destroyed the Liberal Party, divided since wartime failures had led to the toppling of Herbert Asquith. He had been supplanted by David Lloyd George, who had governed with his own Liberal faction plus Conservatives and some Labour members.

In 1918 this coalition (minus most of its Labour members) stood for re-election. Lloyd George and Tory leader Andrew Bonar Law sent letters – ‘coalition coupons’ – endorsing candidates who supported them.

They won a huge majority, mostly thanks to Lloyd George’s popularity. Most coalition MPs were Conservatives, and the Asquith Liberals (dubbed ‘Squiffites’) were virtually wiped out. The great irony of the Liberal Lloyd George’s success was that the Liberals have never since formed a majority government. **H**

.....
Eugene Byrne, author and journalist



High point The Catalan Atlas from 1375 shows north Africa and western Europe. North sits at the top of this particular map but that has not been the case through much of history

HOW WE FOUND OUR BEARINGS

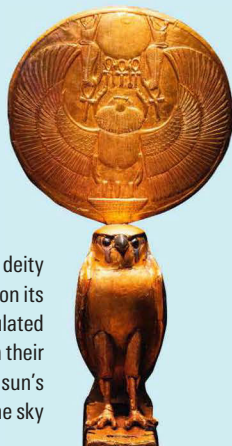
Why did the ancient Chinese associate north with power? And what led early Muslims to pray to the south?

Jerry Brotton takes us on a journey through the history of the four points of the compass



Four points of the compass

Sun god The Egyptian deity Horus with a solar disc on its head. The ancients formulated the east-west axis from their observations of the sun's journey across the sky



Body language Chinese tiles representing the four cardinal points. The pictograph for north shows two people sitting back to back



Writing in his philosophical work the *New Organon* in 1620, the English scientist and philosopher Sir Francis Bacon famously identified China's three great inventions, "which were unknown to the ancients, and of which the origin, though recent, is obscure and inglorious; namely printing, gunpowder and the magnet. For these three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world."

Much has been written about the historical impact of printing and gunpowder. But there's been far less emphasis on the magnet, and how (using lodestones to magnetise iron needles) it enabled the 'obscure' invention of the magnetic compass during the Han dynasty in the third century BC. This technology enabled China and, subsequently, other societies to navigate and orientate themselves according to the four points of the compass: north, east, south and west. We tend to think about these directions and the art of navigation as a consequence of the invention of the compass, but this is not in fact the case. The ancient history of direction and its relationship to the magnetic compass is altogether more surprising.

The dying sun

Thousands of years before the discovery of the compass, early human societies observed the sun rising in the direction we now call 'east' and watched it setting in the direction now known as 'west'. East to west was probably the earliest prime axis that people understood by simply watching the sun's path across the sky. The worship of the sun, or heliolatry, characterised ancient Egyptian worship of solar gods: Horus (the rising sun), Ra (the noon sun) and Osiris (the dying or setting sun).

This initial east-west solar axis was gradually followed by the understanding of another axis. This one ran vertically from north to south, and could be identified by observing the sun and stars. At noon the sun is always due south in the northern

hemisphere and due north in the southern hemisphere. Living in the northern hemisphere, you can also look up at the stars and find north according to Polaris, the North or Pole Star. If you live in the southern hemisphere, that direction is identified by Polaris Australis, the South Star.

By combining the two axes – east-west horizontally and north-south vertically – ancient societies created the basic framework for what we now call the four cardinal directions. The word 'cardinal' comes from the Latin *cardinalis*, which can mean something (or someone) of fundamental importance. That's why, in the Roman Catholic church, it refers to a priest ranking beneath only the pope.

The names for these four directions were also inspired by the human body: our front and back, left and right, even top and bottom. In many ancient languages, 'front' and 'back' are synonymous with east and west. In Hebrew, east – *qedem* or *mizrach* – also means 'forward' or 'front', while 'west' – *achor* – is a synonym for 'behind'.

In ancient Chinese, the pictograph for north, 北 or *běi*, represents two people back to back. The dark and cold north is synonymous with the 'back' of the body, while the 'front' looks southwards (*nán*), in the direction of light and warmth.

The earliest surviving record that we know of that names the four cardinal directions

Early human societies observed the sun rising in the direction we now call 'east'

Star signs The sky at night. Our ancestors set the north-south axis from their observation of the heavens



Way ahead A Chinese compass. This technology was invented during the Han dynasty – by magnetising iron needles with lodestones – centuries before it was used by European explorers



Four points of the compass

Seventh heaven

The Romans called north *septriones* after the 'seven stars' of Ursa Major (right), which appears to rotate around the northern star, Polaris



Scene setter This clay tablet, known as the 'Gasur Map', contains the earliest known reference to the four cardinal directions. It was produced during the Akkadian dynasty of the third millennium BC and shows an agricultural province



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/WELLCOME

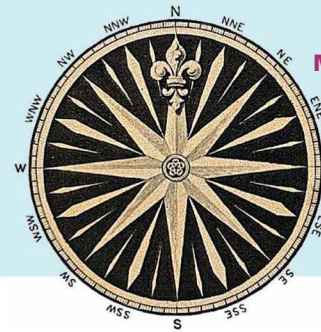
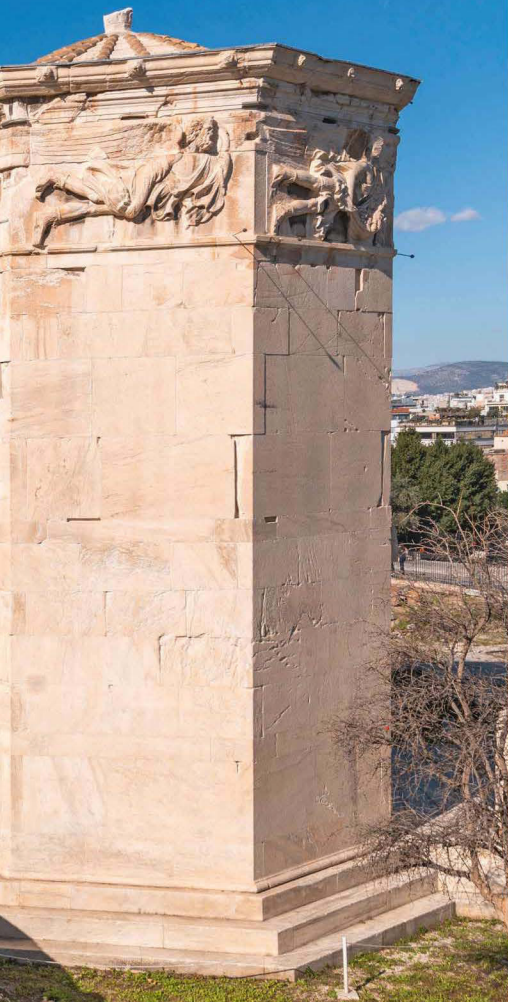


The politics of the compass

Jerry Brotton will be taking the story further on our podcast soon: historyextra.com/podcast



Wind power Completed by about 50 BC, the Tower of the Winds (below) in Athens depicts eight deities, including (above) Eurus, the god of the east wind, and (left) Lips, god of the south-west wind. Ancient peoples from the Mesopotamians to the Greeks were obsessed with wind directions because they could be the difference between feast and famine



Multiple points

A 19th-century engraving of a compass. It was under Charlemagne, a thousand years earlier, that the directions had first been named with proto-Germanic words

was inscribed on a clay tablet during the first great Mesopotamian empire, the Akkadian dynasty (c2350–2150 BC). It is a rudimentary topographical map known as the ‘Gasur map’, showing an agricultural estate. At the top left is *IM-kur*, ‘east’; at the bottom left is *IM-mar-tu*, ‘west’; and to the centre left *IM-mir*, ‘north’.

The prefix ‘IM’ refers to winds, not astronomical observations. Other Mesopotamian texts describe four principal winds forming a diagonal cross, equivalent to the modern directions of north-west, north-east, south-east and south-west. When the cuneiform text on the map is read from top to bottom, *IM-mir*, the direction from which the regular north-western winds blow, is the prime orientation. What this shows is that the farmers cultivating the land more than 4,000 years ago understood the four cardinal directions in terms of wind direction and changeable climatic conditions. Why? Because they were crucial for the cultivation of crops and could mean the difference between feast and famine.

Gloom of sunset

Ancient Greek philosophy and science inherited the Mesopotamian preoccupation with winds. Mythical personifications of the four directions as gods first appear in the ancient works of Homer (c800 BC). His celebrated epic poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, both mention four deities representing cardinal winds. *Boreas*, the north wind, is possibly an archaic variant of ‘mountains’ or ‘roaring’. *Notos*, the south wind, derives from ‘moist’. *Eurus*, the east wind, comes from the ‘brightness’ of sunrise. The western wind of *Zephyrus* stems from the ‘gloom’ of sunset.

Later Greek philosophers offered a more naturalistic account of direction. Aristotle’s *Meteorology* (c350 BC) includes the earliest known geometrical diagram of cardinal directions according to wind systems, depicting eight principal winds in his conception of the Earth.

The Romans adopted many of the Greek terms for directions based on winds, and introduced some new Latin words. North

came first, named *borealis* or *septentriones*, a reference to the ‘seven stars’ of Ursa Major (which appears to rotate around the northern star, Polaris). South was given several new terms, including *australis* (‘harsh’ or ‘sharp’ – thanks to the harsh heat and hot, sharp winds) or *meridionalis* (from ‘midday’). West was *occidentalis* (‘falling’ or ‘passing away’) and east was *orientalis* (‘rising’ or ‘originating’, as in the sun). So, when we speak of being ‘disoriented’, we are literally saying we are unable to find the east.

These ideas and terms were accepted until the ninth century, when a radical change took place that changed the names of the cardinal directions. This happened under Charlemagne (748–814), emperor of much of the northern part of Europe. In attempting to unify the continent, Charlemagne initiated many political, economic and educational reforms. This included abandoning winds as a means of classifying directions and renaming the four directions using proto-Germanic words, derived from Indo-European roots.

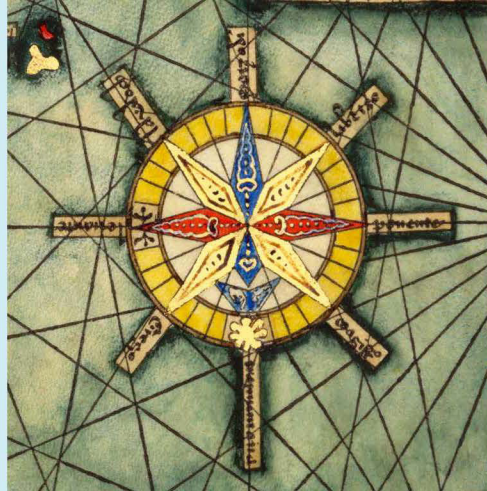
Nord (north) came from the proto-Indo-European term, *nórto-s* – ‘lower’, or to the ‘left’ (of the rising sun looking east). *Est* (east) drew on the Indo-European *austo-s* – ‘light’ or ‘shine’ (as in the morning). *Sund* (south) derived from an archaic term for the sun, *sú-n-to-s*, referring to the south as the direction of the midday sun. *Oëst* (west) took

When we speak of being ‘disoriented’, we are literally saying we are unable to find the east

Four points of the compass

Floral tribute

A compass rose on the Catalan Atlas. The 17th-century philosopher Francis Bacon hailed the compass as one of China's three great inventions



its name from the proto-Indo-European *uestos* with its many meanings of the evening, including red (as in the setting sun). Versions of these words are now recognisable in most modern European vernacular languages.

The impact of these evolving ideas of the cardinal directions underpinned early theological belief across various cultures. Jewish and Christian theology revered the east as the prime cardinal direction of worship and celebration. The story begins in Genesis: God “planted a garden eastward in Eden” (Genesis 2:8). The messiah’s second coming is predicted as arriving from the east, “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:27). *Mizrach*, or east, thus became the Jewish direction of prayer.

Early Christianity expanded the Jewish *mizrach* by developing the Latin term *Ad orientem* – ‘to the east’ – to understand east as its sacred direction. The idea can be seen on medieval Christian maps, such as the mappa mundi housed in Hereford Cathedral. Here the cardinal directions are represented on its outer ring from the top, moving clockwise, from *oriens* (east), *meridiens* (south), *occidens* (west) to *septentrio* (north). The Garden of Eden is shown at the top, then time flows downwards through images of Old Testament empires, the birth of Christ and

the rise of Rome, with Jerusalem at the centre. It ends at the westernmost point of Gibraltar at the bottom of the map.

Where east sat at the top of early Christian maps for theological reasons, on many early Islamic maps south was the prime direction. This was because most of the societies that first converted to Islam lived directly north of Mecca. As a result, believers prayed due south, a practice that oriented their world maps accordingly.

On a map dated 1297 (copied from the 10th-century geographer Muhammad al-Istakhri), the world is oriented with south at the top. Africa is a claw extending deep into the Indian Ocean, and the vertical bar running from top right downwards is the Nile, flowing into the Mediterranean with three islands: Cyprus, Crete and Sicily. Europe is shown below, including Muslim Spain (*al-Andalus*). The map’s finest detail lies at the heart of the Muslim empire, whose various administrative districts are demarcated in red. Arabia sits in the centre of the map with the holy sites of Mecca and Medina.

It’s cold up north

While east and south defined the theological directions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in China north sat at the top of their world maps, hundreds of years before Europe adopted such a convention. In Chinese belief, the emperor was the ‘Son of Heaven’, the earthly manifestation of the supreme deity inhabiting the Pole Star. The emperor looked ‘down’ south on his subjects from an elevated position on high in the north, while they looked ‘up’ northwards to him. ‘South’ (*nan*) was expressed in its pictograph as a liana plant, evoking the luxuriant vegetation of the south as viewed from the drier, colder northern latitudes. But north remained the direction from which imperial power and authority emanated.

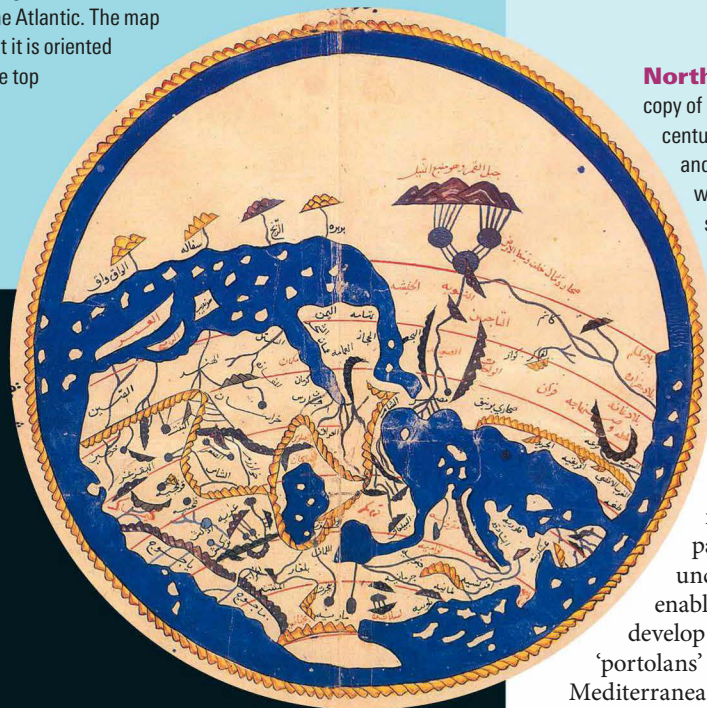
For centuries, China was a global leader in the technology of navigation – and it was



SPL/ALAMY

On early Islamic maps, south was the prime direction, as most believers prayed due south

A new perspective This 1500 map by Juan de la Cosa shows Christopher Columbus's 'discoveries' following his iconic 1492–93 voyage across the Atlantic. The map is unusual in that it is oriented with west at the top



Northern sands A 1533 copy of Muhammad al-Idrisi's 12th-century map of Europe, western Asia and north Africa. As was customary with Islamic maps at the time, south sits at the top

Fall of the west The primacy of the east in early Christian belief is reflected in the c1300 mappa mundi, housed in Hereford Cathedral. East sits at the top, with the westernmost point, Gibraltar, at the bottom



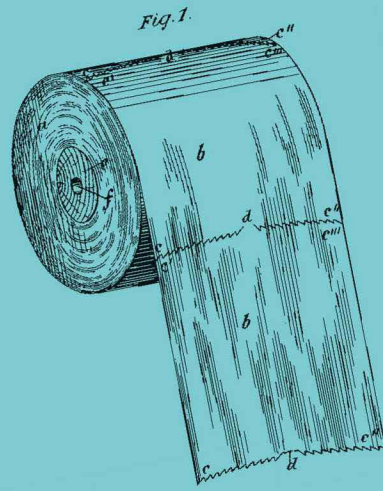
only in the 12th century AD that the magnetic compass started to appear in the Mediterranean for use in navigation. How these compasses moved west is still unclear. But they were decisive in enabling Christian navigators to develop sailing charts known as 'portolans' to navigate across, first, the Mediterranean, and then the Atlantic and Indian oceans.

Yet though their explorations were facilitated by a Chinese technology, European explorers didn't initially follow the Chinese convention of placing north at the top of their maps. Eight years after Christopher Columbus's momentous voyage to the Americas in 1492–93, Juan de la Cosa, owner of Columbus's flagship, *La Santa María*, drew a map showing the new 'discoveries' in the west. The writing on the map suggests that it should be oriented with west at the top – one of the few world maps to ever privilege 'west' as its cardinal direction. The west briefly became the cardinal direction – until European scholars, who tended to revere the classics, chose to mimic the ancient Greek practice of placing north at the top of their maps.

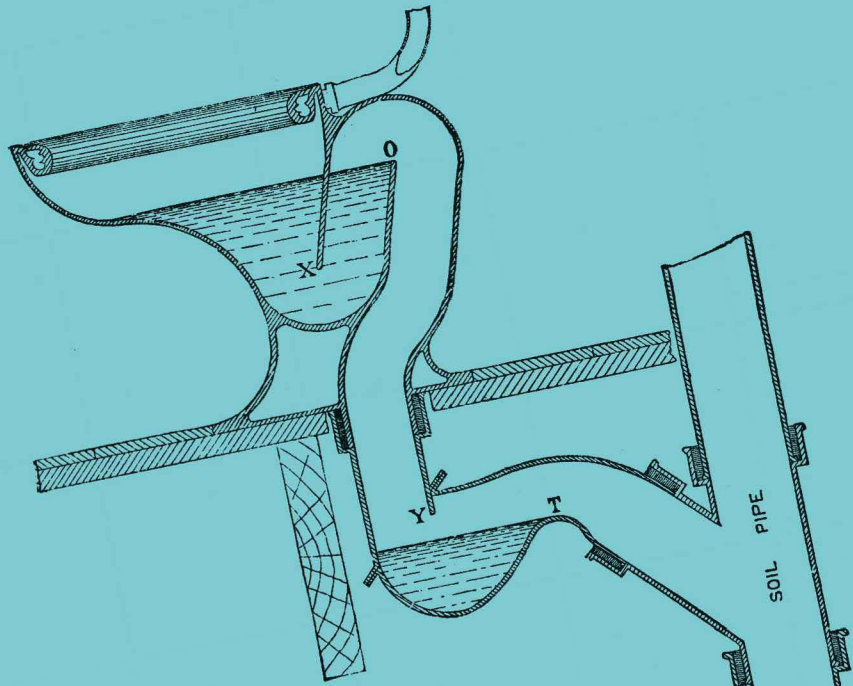
Juan de la Cosa's map also features a 'compass rose' in the middle of the Atlantic, a symbol of the key role that the instrument was to play in the coming centuries.

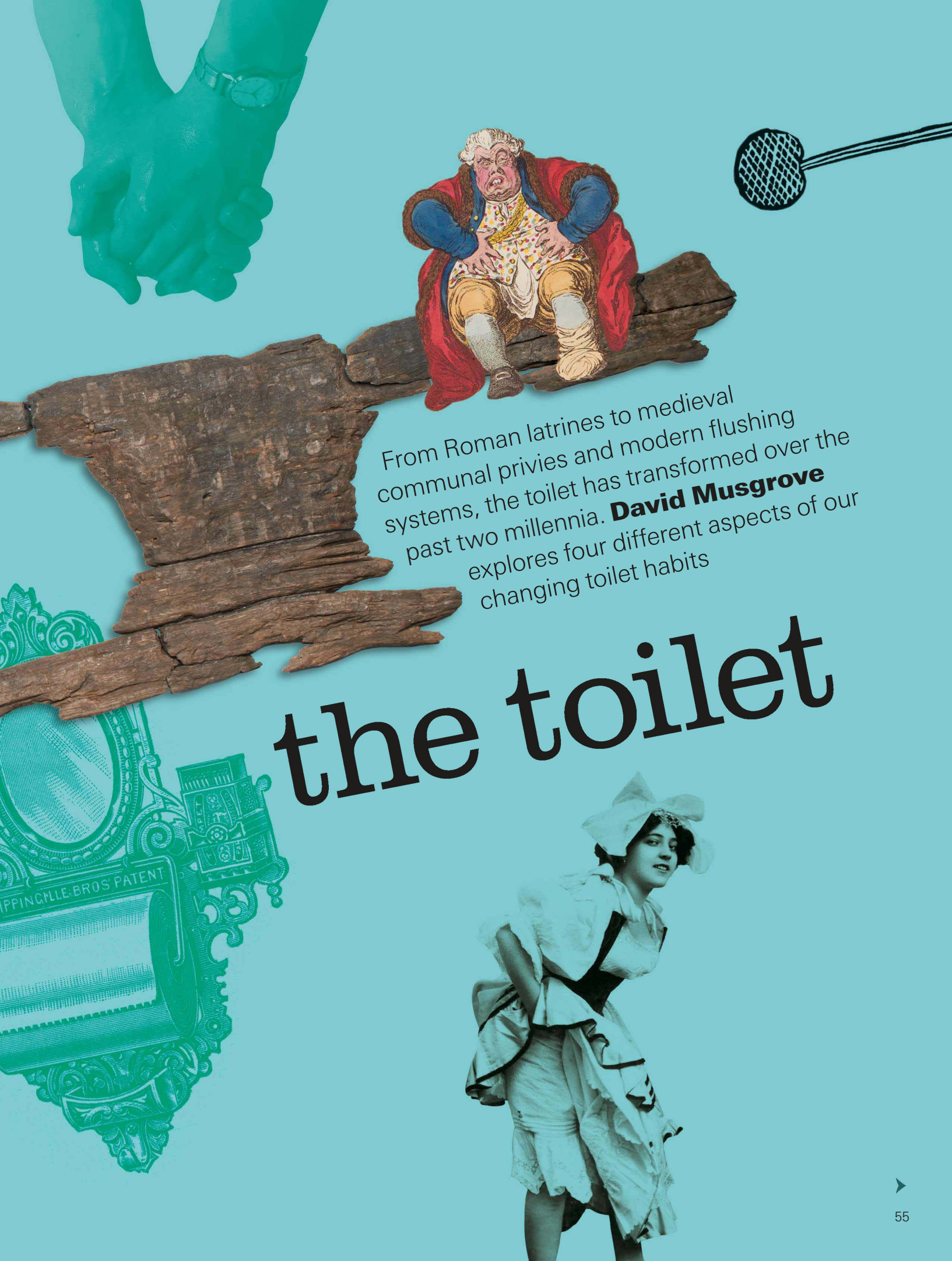
Soon, with the European age of discovery gathering momentum, the magnetic compass would well and truly triumph. Many of us may have naturally assumed that the compass gave us the words we use for the cardinal directions – north and south, east and west. Yet, as the long and colourful history of our relationship with orientation and navigation proves, it was the other way round. **H**

Jerry Brotton is professor of Renaissance studies at Queen Mary University of London. His new book, *Four Points of the Compass: The Unexpected History of Direction*, is published by Allen Lane in September



Tales from





From Roman latrines to medieval communal privies and modern flushing systems, the toilet has transformed over the past two millennia. **David Musgrove** explores four different aspects of our changing toilet habits

the toilet

Wipe or scrape?

A range of materials were used for post-toilet personal hygiene

One thing everyone knows – or thinks they know – about ancient Roman toilet habits is that, rather than wiping their behinds with paper, they reached for a sponge on a stick. However, experts are still not sure whether this utensil – known as a *tersorium* or *xylosporgium* – was used to clean personal parts or to scrub the toilet. (Hopefully the Romans themselves were clear on this point.) If sponges weren't available, other handy stuff that might be used included leaves, clumps of moss and broken bits of pottery.

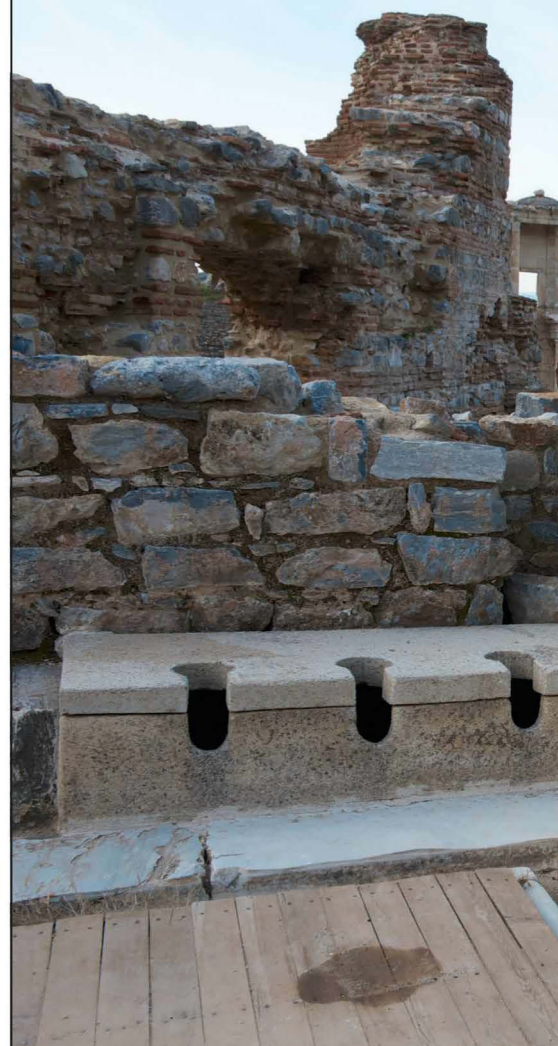
In the Middle Ages, moss was the wiping material of choice for many people, and a brisk trade developed bringing moss from the countryside to towns for this purpose. Straw was also sometimes used as a (rather less comfortable) alternative. We have direct literary evidence for this: the late 12th-century *Chronicle of the Abbey of St Edmunds* relates how a candle left in a toilet was discovered just as it was about to set fire to the straw kept there for the monks' convenience.

In the Tudor period, high-society ladies liked to use goose feathers to clean their delicate behinds. A far more uncomfortable alternative at the time was to use the shells of oysters or mussels – presumably scraping rather than wiping.

By the Victorian era, and following the arrival of printed mass media, paper was far more easily available and commonly used in toilets. Generally, it was previous days' newspapers or leaves torn from books that provided the necessary material.



Over the centuries, moss, sponge and even mussel shells were used for cleaning British behinds



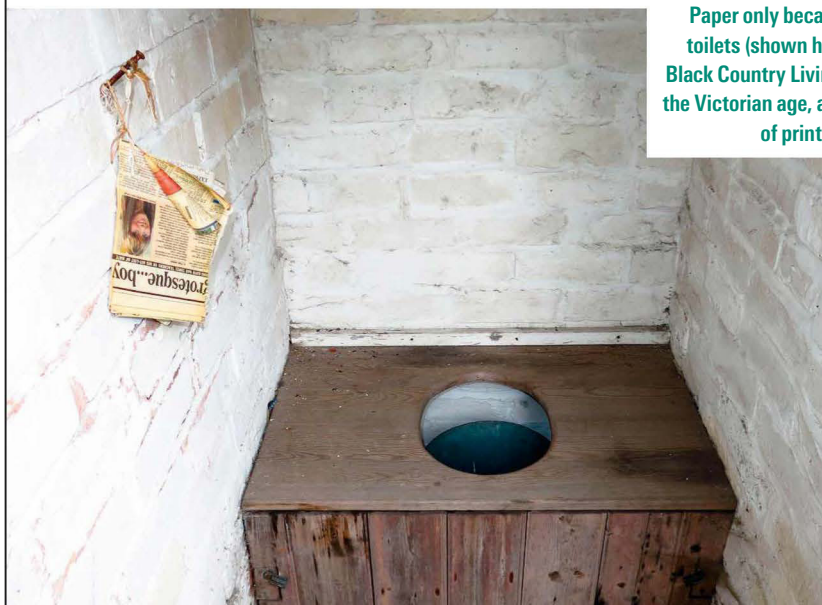
All together now

In past centuries, using the toilet was often a shared experience

From a modern perspective, one of the more unsettling aspects of the toilet experience in past eras is that it was rarely private – particularly for people outside the upper echelons of society.

Many Roman toilets were communal. Such latrines were large rooms around which were ranged long wooden or stone benches, with holes cut for waste to fall into a trough beneath. Many people would use a latrine at the same time, so you might sit within touching distance of the neighbouring occupant, and there were no dividing screens. However, the toilet probably wasn't completely open to public view; a door or curtain would have shielded the entrance.

"At some communal toilets, we have evidence of doors to block off views from the outside world, suggesting that you went to the loo outside the social gaze," observes Hannah Platts, senior lecturer in ancient history and archaeology at Royal Holloway, University of London. "[Inside the latrine] you were among people but shielded from public view. That's really interesting in



Paper only became common in toilets (shown here in Dudley's Black Country Living Museum) in the Victorian age, after the arrival of printed mass media

Communal latrines, such as this first-century AD example in Ephesus, near modern Selçuk in Turkey, were widespread in the Roman empire



A private toilet was a major status symbol in the Tudor era, installed in luxurious houses such as Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire. Waste from such a garderobe fell into a cesspit, moat or river below

telling us about what was expected and accepted in terms of daily habits, and how people perceived going to the toilet.”

Communal toilets were still in use in England during the Middle Ages. For example, a 12th-century wooden bench sporting three holes (shown on the previous page) was discovered in Ludgate Hill, London in the 1980s. And at Langley Castle in Northumberland, the latrine tower features four stalls set in a row, with low stone screens between them – but no obvious doors, so again it would not have been a private experience.

The question of etiquette in a communal medieval toilet was addressed by Daniel of Beccles in his *Book of the Civilised Man*, a ‘courtesy book’ outlining rules of manners written probably at the start of the 13th century. Among other pieces of advice, Daniel urges men urinating together to maintain a chilly silence – suggesting that some were uncomfortably loquacious in such a scenario.

Communal toilets persisted into the Tudor period in some places. The Great House of Easement in Hampton Court, for example, provided 28 seats set over two floors. There were no cubicles, so you could just go in and see who was in residence – and, contrary to the advice of Daniel of Beccles, it might have been a place where gossip was spread and affairs of court discussed.



David Musgrove spoke to experts Hannah Platts, James Wright, Tracy Borman and Jerry White for a special HistoryExtra podcast series exploring **the curious history** of this most inescapable aspect of our daily lives – from ancient communal latrines and early flushing toilets to important advances in public sanitation. Listen now at [historyextra.com/toilets-series](https://www.historyextra.com/toilets-series)



“You would just sit there, next to each other – men and women,” says author and historian Tracy Borman. “It was seen as quite a social activity: you would have a chat and talk about the latest gossip at court and the latest events, and do your business at the same time. There wasn’t the same kind of embarrassment or need for privacy.”

For many men, of course, urinating outside was quicker and more pleasant – but could cause different problems. For example, Cardinal Wolsey became very annoyed by courtiers urinating on the walls of Tudor palaces. *The Eltham Ordinance* (1526), a set of rules for conduct at court, records his strategy to deter this behaviour – ordering that red crosses be placed in areas where this activity was prevalent. It was, of course, considered bad form to relieve oneself on a crucifix, so Wolsey’s gambit fixed the problem.

By the late 18th century, private toilets were becoming more common, and the middle classes embraced the flushing water closet, but communal toilets remained in use.

“Constipation was a real issue,” says Jerry White, an author and historian of London. “Hence the popularity of spa waters, which were heavy in iron and which made going to the loo easier [it acted as a laxative]. One notorious place was Bagnigge Wells, near King’s Cross in north London. Here visitors would perch side-by-side on a long pole, chat about what was going on and wait for the spa water to take effect. One rather amusing ditty about going to Bagnigge Wells mentions being able to ‘hear the thunder of the bum.’”



As this late 15th-century painting suggests, by the Tudor period most people had become careful about washing their hands, particularly after using the toilet and before eating

Now wash your hands

Our understanding of the importance of handwashing has evolved over the centuries

Public toilets today sport the ubiquitous – and wise – reminder: ‘Now wash your hands.’ Interestingly, our ancient forebears might not have understood the message in quite the same way.

Though Romans may have washed after going to the toilet, they didn’t really grasp the health implications of keeping hands clean. One literary source describes a wealthy Roman at a banquet pausing mid-meal to urinate; he then washes his hands – and dries them on the (presumably dirty) hair of an unfortunate slave.

Similarly, though the Romans were famously advanced in terms of sewerage technology, they did not recognise the risks of bacterial disease transmitted via excrement. Roman sewers were built not with health and hygiene in mind but simply to address the practical need to move waste matter away from populated areas.

In the Middle Ages, people were generally keen to maintain a high level of personal cleanliness, and

receptacles holding water might have been positioned at or near toilets for handwashing. In higher-status toilets, “usually, but not always, there was a recess set into the wall”, explains James Wright, a buildings archaeologist and author. “We can imagine that there might be a pile of mosses in those recesses. I don’t think it’s a big stretch to imagine that there might also have been a bowl there in which to wash your hands.”

By the Tudor period, most people were careful about washing their hands, particularly before eating. They would also change their linen underwear several times each day – if they could afford it. The Victorians were even more aware of the importance of handwashing, but a piped supply of clean water was a rarity in British homes until the early 20th century, so people might have struggled to find water to wash regularly.

Flushing matters

The development and widespread introduction of water-flushed toilets took many centuries

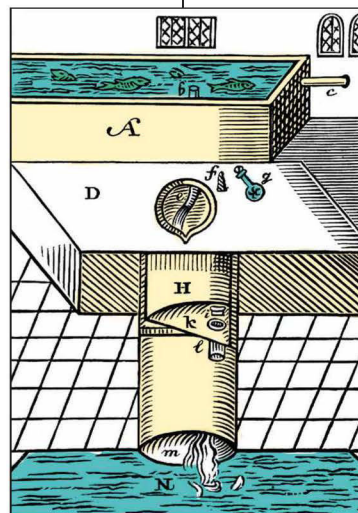
A popular misconception holds that Sir John Harington invented the flushing toilet for his godmother, Elizabeth I. He certainly helped to popularise the concept, even writing a book about ‘Ajax’ (a play on the word ‘jakes’, then a slang word for a toilet) – and we know that Elizabeth ordered a flushing toilet to be installed in Richmond Palace – but he wasn’t the first to devise such a contraption.

Court records mention a building in medieval London that boasted a system of lead pipes taking water from a rooftop cistern to flush the contents of a latrine into the street. This innovation was, unsurprisingly, not well received by the local residents, who brought a court case to protest the resulting public nuisance – hence the surviving record.

There is also archaeological evidence for a flushing toilet at Wingfield Manor in Derbyshire, which was built in the 1440s for the powerful politician Sir Ralph Cromwell, and which featured a high tower topped by a cistern for storing rainwater. The cistern itself no longer survives, but the water shaft that led down from it still runs through a chimney-like structure. There was a sluice to hold back the water, opened once a week to release a deluge that flushed out a communal latrine below.

It must have been quite a dramatic event!

Clearly, this kind of technology took a good couple of centuries more to catch on – just one of many aspects of toilet technology and etiquette we take for granted today. **H**



Sir John Harington's 1596 design was among the earliest flushing toilets

Dr David Musgrove is content director for BBC History Magazine and HistoryExtra.com



Listen to **Lifting the Lid: The History of the Toilet**, an episode of BBC World Service series *The Forum*, at bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3cswpxs **BBC SOUNDS**



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Harry Grindell Matthews

A strangely inventive mind

In the febrile interwar years, one inventor's claims of having designed a 'Death Ray' sparked a sensation among authorities and investors alike. **EUGENE BYRNE** explores the life of a man who was both a genius and a grifter

The 11am flight to Paris from Croydon Aerodrome on Tuesday 27 May 1924 made national headlines. True, it was an ordinary scheduled service – but one of the passengers was far from ordinary. The following morning, readers up and down the country learned of a desperate chase to prevent inventor Harry Grindell Matthews from leaving Britain – taking with him the secrets of his purported 'Death Ray'.

According to these newspaper accounts, this thrilling episode involved a high-speed chase in a hired car by shareholders armed with an injunction, who sped to the airfield – arriving just in time to watch the plane lift off and soar away. In truth, it was more Keystone Kops than Bulldog Drummond.

Matthews' shareholders weren't the only interested parties: the British government did not want any foreign power getting its hands on a potentially war-winning weapon. But the authorities were far from certain that Matthews had made anything of the sort. Indeed, the Air Ministry released a frank and surprisingly detailed statement explaining that its officials had found a demonstration of the device unconvincing.

Was the inventor a genius ahead of his time? Or merely a shameless grifter? Actually, he was both.

Harry Grindell Matthews was born at Winterbourne, Gloucestershire in 1880, one of at least five children of farmer Daniel Matthews and his wife Jane (née Grindell).

His father died when Harry was three, but the family appears to have been left comfortably off. His education included a spell at the Merchant Venturers' Technical College in Bristol, where he completed the course in record time. Matthews then took an apprenticeship with a firm of electrical engineers.

He volunteered to fight in the Boer War, during which he was reportedly wounded twice. For some years before the First World War he lived in Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex. There, while taking on mundane electrical jobs, he

worked on his inventions with the support of a wealthy local eccentric, Gilbert Sackville, 8th Earl De La Warr. These included 'wireless torpedoes' and wireless telephony – transmission of speech by radio.

In 1911, he staged a demonstration of that latter invention, communicating from the ground with the pilot of an aircraft flying two miles away. The Admiralty requested a presentation, and Matthews agreed – but stipulated that no 'experts' be present. On the day, he found Admiralty men taking apart his equipment and making notes. Matthews stormed out, taking his 'aerophone' with him.

It would be tempting to conclude that Matthews feared being exposed as a fraud, but he was probably trying to protect his intellectual property – because the aerophone worked. Soon afterwards, a south Wales newspaper, the *Western Mail*, successfully used the invention to link their Newport and Cardiff offices.

The Admiralty decided to stick with the established system of wireless telegraphy, using dots and dashes to send messages in Morse code, which was clearer and less prone to communication errors. However, clarity and accuracy may not have been the only reasons for that decision: it later emerged that various government ministers held shares in the Marconi company, which was threatened by Matthews' development.

Even so, his ideas were gaining traction. During the First World War, Matthews successfully demonstrated a remote-controlled boat to Admiralty officials on a pond in Richmond Park. He was paid £25,000 for his invention – a huge sum at the time, and a clear indication of official confidence in him.

Talking the talkies

In 1921, Matthews demonstrated a 'talking picture' – a short movie of explorer Ernest Shackleton speaking about his Antarctic expedition – with a narrow strip between the picture frames and the sprocket holes at the edge of the film ensuring perfect synchronism of image and sound. It was a brilliant innovation, but film industry bosses were sceptical, insisting that 'talkies' would never catch on – and in any case, no cinema had the equipment to show such a film.

It was with his next device that Matthews really seems to have overreached himself: the weapon that the press

// Matthews' claim to have devised a ray that could make aircraft fall from the sky provoked a sensation //



Inventor Harry Grindell Matthews' innovations were sometimes successful, but often – notably his 'Death Ray' – subject to official suspicion and even derision during his lifetime

COLLAGE BY **RACHEL DICKENS**

quickly dubbed the “Death Ray”. By 1923, when he announced his new design, it was accepted wisdom that any future war would inevitably involve aerial bombing on a massive scale. So Matthews' claim to have devised a ray that could make aircraft fall from the sky provoked a sensation.

“I am confident,” he said, “that if I have facilities for developing it, I can stop aeroplanes in flight. Indeed, I believe the ray is sufficiently powerful to... explode powder magazines and destroy anything on which it rests.”

In 1924, Matthews demonstrated a prototype to newspaper reporters, who were impressed, then to government officials, who were not – in part, perhaps, because he offered only the vaguest explanation of how it functioned. Irrked by this lack of confidence in his work, Matthews claimed that he'd received an offer from France to buy the

ray. And, despite the efforts of an Air Ministry official to renegotiate, and his investors' dash to the airport, he flew to Paris to start talks.

In the event, he failed to make a deal in France, and was soon back in Britain – but still refused to allow a proper examination of his device. Instead, he made a 25-minute (silent) film promoting his 'Death Ray', which was widely screened in Britain and the US.

The press remained firmly on his side. In a full-page article in the ultra-patriotic magazine *John Bull*, he told readers that his invention was “not a death ray, but a ray of hope” that could end wars and might also, he mused, be able to cure cancer.

Crossing the Atlantic, Matthews found US scientists as unimpressed with his invention as their British counterparts. One professor even offered to stand in front of the



A poster for *Rocket Ship*, the feature film of the serial *Flash Gordon*. Interwar visions of the future were influenced by Matthews' ideas



Croydon Aerodrome, pictured in 1926. Two years earlier, Matthews' threat to sell his 'Death Ray' to a French party had sparked a dash to this airfield by investors determined to stop him

ray to prove that it didn't work. Needless to say, no deal was forthcoming, and talk of the 'Death Ray' soon ebbed away. Remaining in the US, Matthews began working for the film studio Warner Brothers, helping them develop 'talking pictures' – movies with sound.

Angel phase

It wasn't until some years later that Matthews unveiled his next invention in Britain. On the evening of 24 December 1930, astonished crowds watched as pictures from his 'sky projector' appeared over Hampstead Heath. An image of an angel was so convincing that some people reportedly fell to their knees, believing that the Second Coming was nigh.

The dramatic impact of that creation wasn't enough to stave off his creditors. The following year, Matthews was declared bankrupt, with court proceedings revealing that much of the money lent or invested by various backers had been spent on stays in hotels and high-end rented homes.

Despite this setback, Matthews somehow found new sponsors. Relocating to a remote spot north of Swansea,

he built a large bungalow with six bedrooms, a laboratory and his own private airstrip, all guarded by an electrified fence with steel gates. There he continued working on new inventions. At the outbreak of the Second World War, he was working on a rocket plane powered by liquid hydrogen. He also offered 'aerial mines' and a device for detecting submarines; as before, though, officials were sceptical.

Harry Grindell Matthews died of a heart attack at his Welsh home on 11 September 1941, aged 61. Just seven people – including the local police constable – attended the funeral.

What are we to make of him? In the debit column, we have to include his love of fine living, leading him to squander his backers' money, as well as his poor treatment of many of those around him. He deserted his first wife, Kate Williams, shortly after their marriage in 1904; it took her years to track him down to Bexhill – where he was living with another woman – and divorce him. His second marriage, to an American woman, also didn't last. Finally, in 1938, he became the fifth husband of the hugely wealthy opera singer Ganna Walska; that, too, didn't last.

Matthews' 'Death Ray' was his invention that attracted the most attention. He may have believed honestly that he could build it, given enough time and money, but his claims for it and his surrounding activities were unquestionably suspicious.

Nearly all of his other inventions were successful, though, and his work was the stuff of science fiction. Look at Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon and other interwar visions of the future, and you can see Harry's ideas embedded in them. Liquid hydrogen has been used as rocket propellant in US, European and Japanese space launches. And the signal beamed into the night sky to summon Batman to save Gotham? That's Harry Matthews' sky projector. **H**

Eugene Byrne is a journalist and author, and a regular contributor to *BBC History Magazine*



Listen to an episode of BBC Radio 4's **Punt PI** about Harry Grindell Matthews at bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b014f1cv



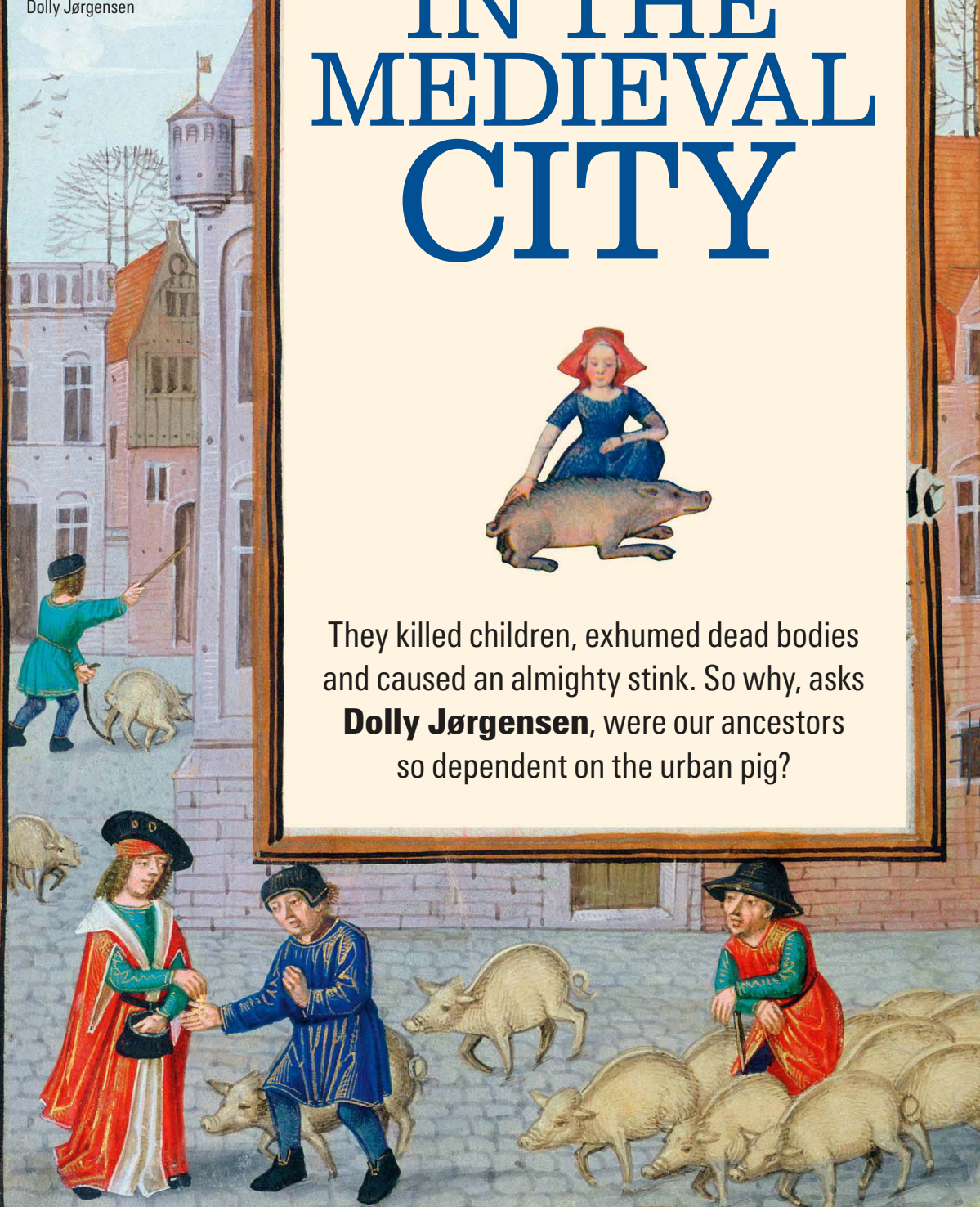
// Astonished crowds watched as pictures from the 'sky projector' appeared over Hampstead Heath //

Men sell swine at market,
as shown in a c1510 prayer
book. "Pigs were a part of
everyday life in medieval
English towns," writes
Dolly Jørgensen

PIGS IN THE MEDIEVAL CITY



They killed children, exhumed dead bodies
and caused an almighty stink. So why, asks
Dolly Jørgensen, were our ancestors
so dependent on the urban pig?



Medieval pigs

The abbot of St Mary's in York could not stand the stench any longer. He complained to King Edward I in 1298 that the air was corrupted and infected in the streets of the

Bootham district north of York Minster.

He pinned the blame on pigsties along the lanes, swine wandering about the streets, and dung heaps. The court concurred that this was completely unacceptable and ordered the bailiffs to destroy the pigsties by the roads and to ban pigs feeding, or wandering unattended.

At nearly the same time, in London, city authorities ordered the removal of pigsties in the streets and elected four 'swine killers', who were ordered to find and eliminate any pigs found on the main roads. They got half of the proceeds of the sale of the carcass for their service.

English medieval cities and towns in the late 13th century were experiencing a pig problem. The reason was simple: more people in towns equalled more pigs.

Pigs were a part of everyday life in medieval English towns. Raising pigs in the back garden of medieval homes was a standard practice. A taxation roll for Reading in 1297 shows that 30 of 102 taxed households owned pigs. Almost all of them had one or two pigs, indicating that the animals were raised for personal consumption. There were, however, a few people who were raising pigs for commercial slaughter, like one person who had six pigs and four cows.

A court case from London in 1320 demonstrates that raising pigs could be a shared endeavour. In this case, the plaintiff, Adam of Eytone, stated that William of Oxford had agreed to keep a sow of his, who was worth 6 shillings. In return, William would get to keep half of its piglets. The lawsuit was brought because, although the said sow farrowed three times while in his custody, William had refused to return the sow or to deliver half of the piglets to Adam.

Eat and be eaten

People kept pigs for one simple reason: to eat them. Unlike other livestock, which had uses while they were alive (cows produced milk, chickens laid eggs, horses transported riders), pigs were valuable only when dead. Pig products such as lard and salted bacon, which kept well over the winter, were crucial to the medieval diet.

As towns filled up with people and pigs, governments realised that these animals, and the men and women who kept them, needed to be controlled. While the abbot in York had complained about the stench, medieval pigs were also dangerous. In Norwich in 1354



Trot and horror

A swineherd with pigs in a 15th-century manuscript. The animals caused such a stink in York (above) that a local abbot wrote to Edward I to complain

In 1436, an unruly sow broke down a door, knocked over a baby's cradle and ate a blanket

boars damaged houses and gardens, attacked people, exhumed bodies from the graveyard, and even killed children. In 1436, John Luff of Ramsey left a boar and two sows unleashed and one of them broke down a door, knocked over a baby's cradle, and ate a blanket.

Residents tried to fight back against wayward pigs. In Colchester, William Leycestre used a stick to drive off a pig from his yard in 1311, and the servants of Roger Alfred killed a pig they found in Roger's garden in 1312. While having swines in the city was a convenient meat source, they clearly needed to be closely managed.

And medieval town records indicate that

pigs were indeed tightly controlled. The most straightforward thing to do was to ban them from the streets. In the earliest surviving town ordinance from York, which is dated to 1301, no one was permitted to let their pigs roam the streets day or night. Later, the regulations specified that pigs were not permitted on the walls of the town, in the market streets, in alleys, on the Ouse Bridge, or on the quay. Fines were set for people who broke the law. The sergeant or officer who found offending pigs could kill them and sell the carcass, as well as receive part of the fine.

Yet, pigs had to be regularly taken out of their pigpens. According to some town bylaws, sties had to be cleaned of manure on Saturdays when the municipal waste cart came around. The nearby forests, grassy meadows and harvested fields provided good foraging ground for domestic swine, so they would be herded to these locations by swineherds. In the Yorkshire town of Beverley, only pigs under the care of a swineherd going to pasture, and sows with litters, were allowed to be in the streets.

Medieval pigs were literally kept on a leash. In medieval drawings, the swineherd leading a pig in the urban area holds a rope tied to a hindfoot of the pig so he can pull it



Insides out A butcher eviscerates a pig, and people prepare the meat, as depicted in a 16th-century woodcut print. Unlike other livestock, pigs were kept for one reason alone: food

back. The swineherd also carried a staff to steer the animal and nudge it forward.

Town administrators paid swineherds to collect the pigs from householders and take them out to graze. Yet not everyone was satisfied with their service. In 1395, the Nottingham resident Ralph Pollard accused the aptly named Nicholas Swynnard of letting pigs ruin the walls of his garden. Swynnard defended himself vigorously, arguing that it was common practice to herd the pigs in that area and that he had not been negligent in his duties.

Having restrictions on pig movements, and even appointing swineherds, did not mean that all owners managed their pigs properly. In a Nottingham court case of 1398, John Bank claimed that Robert Hayward had allowed his pigs to roam free, instead of keeping them in a sty or in his house, contrary to the mayor's ordinance. The pigs, Bank claimed, devoured his cockerel and some her- ring, causing 10 shillings in damages.

Yet modern readers should not think that pigs were running around creating havoc all the time. Town ordinances reminding owners about the rules governing the management of pigs appear infrequently over the 250 years from 1250 to 1500. Roaming pigs were considered out of the ordinary and unacceptable. Despite the swine-fuelled problems experienced in cities such as York and London, most people were minding their pigs on an everyday basis.

Filthy diets

Whether they were tightly controlled or roamed free, all pigs had to be fed. Single swine often ate scraps. But those that lived in herds were often owned by butchers, and were thus fed the leftovers from the butchery process. Local authorities often took a dim view of this practice. In the mid-14th

century, Coventry's authorities told butchers that they could not take their pigs to the waste pits to feed on butchery entrails or other "filthy" material. In London, two butchers were fined for feeding their pigs butchery waste in the street. Medieval town leaders were clearly concerned about the health implications of eating meat from an animal with such a poor diet.

The authorities were also concerned about manure. This was, of course, a natural byproduct of urban pig-keeping – and it generated a significant stink. Pig-owners sometimes constructed sties next to urban rivers and ditches, in order to make the job of cleaning up after the animal easier. Yet this wasn't enough to stop them clashing with their neighbours. In fact, if the court records of Ramsey (now in Cambridgeshire) are anything to go by, the location of pigsties was the most common swine-related complaint across the 14th century. Pigsties were, the records reveal, often constructed too close to roads, over drainage ditches, or – perhaps worst of all – next to a neighbour's wall or property.



Unhealthy appetite A detail from a 13th-century calendar shows a feeding pig. City authorities fretted about the impact of pigs' diets on human health



Easy pickings A woman holds down a pig while her husband knocks nuts out of the trees for the herd to feed on, as depicted in a 15th-century prayer book. Local forests provided good foraging ground for urban pigs



Albrecht Dürer's c1496 depiction of the Prodigal Son. Readers knew the son had reached rock bottom when he was forced to take a job as a swineherd

SEX, GLUTTONY AND DEMON HOSTS

Why people believed that pigs were in league with the Devil

Pigs are Satan's representatives on Earth. That was the belief of many residents of medieval England – even as they kept swine in their gardens and feasted on salted bacon.

Pigs' demonic associations stem chiefly from stories in the Bible. One is the well-known gospel tale of Jesus casting a legion of demons from a possessed man into a herd of pigs. The 13th-century philosopher Albertus Magnus wrote that Jesus allowed the pigs to become demon hosts because the pig "is a filthy animal, by nature, by law, by custom".

Pigs are used as a metaphor for sin in another famous Bible story, the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The main protagonist of the tale falls upon hard times – so hard, in fact, that he has to take a debasing job as a swineherd. To work with pigs was to associate yourself with filth, gluttony and sexual indiscretion.

Pigs are also cast as a malevolent force in the ninth-century Irish saga *Cath Maige*

Mucrama (The Battle of Mag Mucruma). This popular tale describes how a band of magical swine ascend from hell through the cave of Crúachain, causing seven years of damage to agricultural areas – and defying all attempts to count them.

So why did the pig acquire such a devilish reputation? The answer appears to lie in its natural characteristics. It has large litters of piglets at one time, which was equated to lasciviousness. It likes to wallow in mud, regarded as unclean. And it is a rapacious eater of almost anything, which was identified with gluttony.

Such traits persuaded the early Christian theologian Clement of Alexandria that swine are inherently evil. "The pig refers to pleasure-loving and unclean desire for food and lewd and defiled license in sex," he declared. It is "always itching for matte and lying in mud, fattening for slaughter and destruction".

The rise of landfills for food waste in the 1960s severed the link between living pigs and city-dwellers

While it was the job of the individual owner to feed, house and (hopefully) clean-up after their pigs, they tended to outsource the task of killing the animal to a medieval butcher. Urban butchery was a regulated business, with guild rules and town ordinances governing practices and procedures.

Some urban laws required that pig butchery take place at a scalding house (where boiling water was poured over the pig carcass, the hair scraped off, the organs removed, and edible entrails cleaned of faeces.) The mayor of Coventry commanded that pig slaughter had to take place at such a facility, one of which was under construction in 1421, next to a latrine along the Sherbourne river. The scalding house's riverside location meant that blood and waste from the process could be disposed of easily. Yet, as with pigsties, it would have had a significant impact on local waterways.

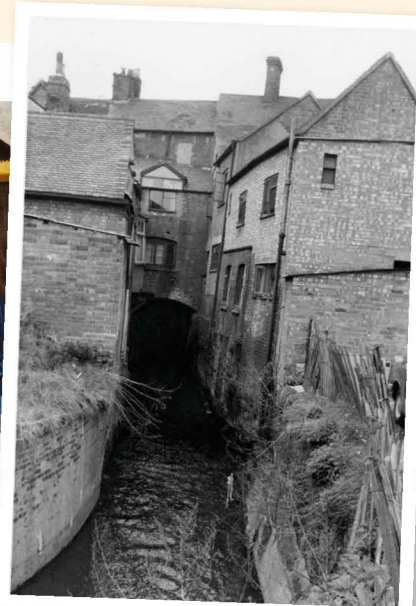
To city-dwellers today, the idea of swine-



Waste area The river Sherbourne (right) was the site of Coventry's scalding house. It was here that the butchery process took place, as shown (left) in a 14th-century health handbook

herds shepherding pigs through the streets, and homeowners cleaning up manure in their back garden, may appear completely alien. Yet pigs and humans lived cheek by jowl until comparatively recently. In fact, it wasn't until the late 19th/early 20th century that city beautification and sanitation movements forced pigs out of urban tenement zones.

Even when they were banished from our cities, pigs continued to live off the leftovers from our ever-growing urban areas – never more famously than when 'victory pigs',



fattened up by food-waste collection programmes, helped ward off hunger during the Second World War.

It was the rise of sanitary landfills in the 1960s as the preferred method of disposal for food waste that finally severed the link between the living pig and the city-dweller. While we continue to eat pork in huge quantities in the 21st century, swine are a common sight on the highways and byways of our towns and cities no more. **H**

Dolly Jørgensen is professor of history at the University of Stavanger, Norway. Her latest book, *The Medieval Pig*, was published by Boydell Press in April

GLOBAL HISTORY

“This is a must-read account of the most consequential encounter in English colonial history”

David Veevers rates a new take on early Anglo-Indian contacts > page 76



BOOKS

SOCIAL HISTORY

// This cornucopia of 400 years of beauty secrets will become a go-to read for anyone interested in the enduring quest for female perfection //

Freya Gowrley recommends a book exploring ideals of female beauty – and the lengths to which women have gone to achieve it > page 72



ENVIRONMENT

“Kehnel explores how past societies treated topics that sound very modern, such as recycling”

Peter Frankopan on a look at how the Middle Ages could inform sustainable living > page 74

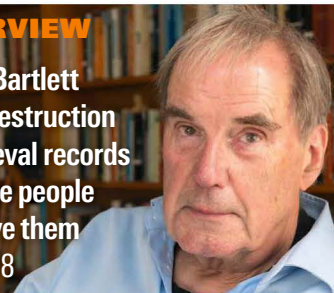
FOOD HISTORY

“There’s plenty to discover in this full-flavoured mix of historical and practical food knowledge”

Eleanor Barnett enjoys a look back at centuries of baking > page 75

INTERVIEW

Robert Bartlett on the destruction of medieval records – and the people who save them > page 68



INTERVIEW / ROBERT BARTLETT

“The complexity of modern national politics has placed history at risk”

ROBERT BARTLETT speaks to Emily Briffett about the large-scale destruction of medieval manuscripts – and how such losses affect our ability to understand the Middle Ages

Emily Briffett: Your new book explores episodes in which large volumes of written material were destroyed in a single day – not by accident, fire or flood but by human forces. Why are these cases so interesting, and what makes them worth studying?

Robert Bartlett: As a medieval historian, I’m very aware of how we know what we know about the Middle Ages, when all written material was produced by hand, as manuscripts. There was no printing, so very often there’s only one copy of something – even famous documents such as the Old English poem *Beowulf*.

This material is precarious – particularly in situations like the ones I describe in the book. I take five case studies in which thousands – sometimes tens of thousands – of medieval books and documents go up in flames, or explode, or are incinerated, by bombing and shelling in just a couple of hours, leaving huge holes in the historical record.

There are several things in common across these episodes. First, they are mainly cases where the modern state had begun to concentrate material in public record offices or national archives – places founded from, say, the time of the French Revolution onwards. The second, slightly more cheerful common factor is that an incredible amount of effort has been made to see what can be saved.

Overall, do we know how much material has been lost?

The answer boils down to two questions: how much was produced, and how much survives? These are not easy things to work out.

In a manuscript culture, the number of copies of anything will be far lower than in a print culture, because copying by hand is a slow process. Then you also have the question of what difference various upheavals have made to document survival.

In England and Scotland, the Reformation was really destructive. Monasteries were closed down and their libraries lost. Parchment had other uses: it was good for wrapping butter and fish and, after the arrival of muskets, for making cartridges. The great scholar and medievalist Neil Ker thought that something like 85 per cent of books from monastic libraries no longer existed.

At the beginning of the 19th century, as part of a peace settlement during the Napoleonic Wars, many German princes lost territory. In compensation, they were given lots of monasteries, along with their libraries.

In Bavaria, the ruler sent out a team to assess these libraries and to say who was going to have what. As a result, the Bavarian State Library in Munich holds rows and rows of these books, all shelved more or less as they were in the monastic libraries. The transition of monastic guardianship to the modern state was far more orderly than it had been in the English and Scottish Reformations – and that obviously made a big difference to survival levels.

Who decides what is worth keeping, and why?

In Bavaria, the oldest and most valuable books went to the ruler, and ones that might be useful for study went to educational institutions. Then there were those described as ‘superstitious’ – mainly books from the libraries of the Franciscan and Dominican friars. They were seen as useless, so were mashed up to make paper.

Otherwise, people in charge pick books that look the nicest and, sometimes, are most valuable. At times when libraries were simply despoiled, people just took gilded covers and things like that – the stuff inside the book was considered to have no value whatsoever.

What is so significant about concentrating material in libraries and archives?

Material placed in a central depository is in a controlled environment, and is more accessible – but also vulnerable if something goes wrong.

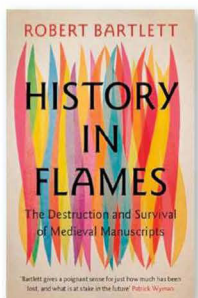
As an example, one of my case studies is the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland during the Irish Civil War in 1922, which was caused by a rift within those opposed to British rule in Ireland. Some were willing to accept a compromise settlement; others were not. The eventual outcome was a divided Ireland, creating an Irish Free State that remained in the British commonwealth.

In April 1922, forces opposed to this outcome occupied a site in the middle of Dublin. Following intense shelling by their opponents, it went up in flames on 30 June – and, unfortunately, that occupied complex of buildings housed the Public Record Office.

Though that office was founded as recently as 1867, there had been a campaign to gather and concentrate documents from all over Ireland in that place. This material hadn’t been produced in a public record office or national archive but in the royal courts and monasteries of the Middle Ages – but its movement to these locations was a product of the state that served only to make it more vulnerable.

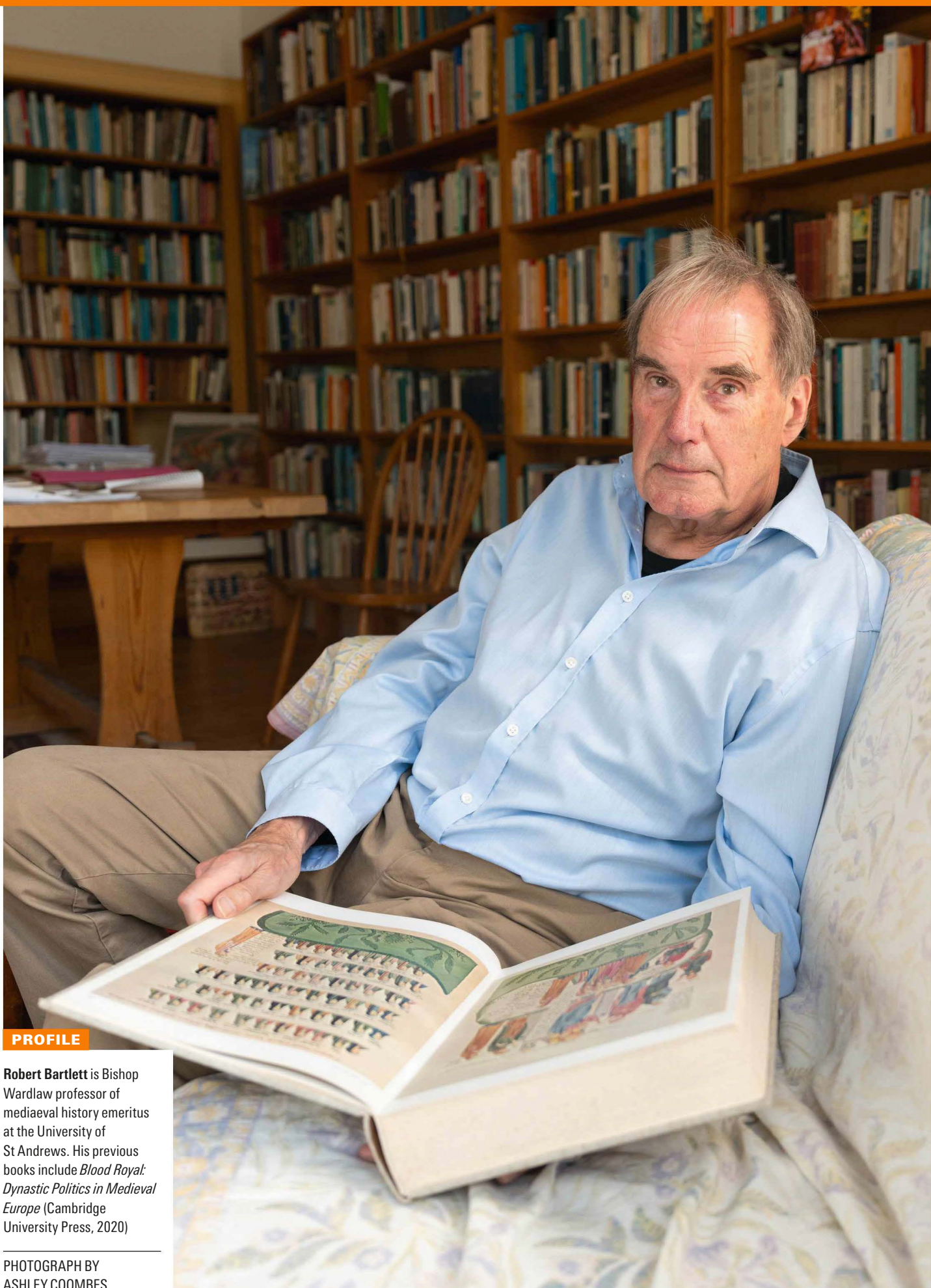
In your book, you write that the modern state has taken on a dual role as curator and destroyer of the past. What do you mean?

Modern European nationalism is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, nationalism asks: what is a nation? The 19th and 20th centuries



History in Flames: The Destruction and Survival of Medieval Manuscripts

by Robert Bartlett
(Cambridge University Press, 220 pages, £20)



PROFILE

Robert Bartlett is Bishop Wardlaw professor of mediaeval history emeritus at the University of St Andrews. His previous books include *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2020)

PHOTOGRAPH BY
ASHLEY COOMBS

were a wonderful time for historical scholarship – much of it, especially in the early days, inspired by this nationalist sentiment.

However, nationalism has also set European states at each other's throats. For example, look at the destruction of the Municipal Library in Strasbourg during a long-running territorial dispute between the German states and France. Strasbourg had been a German city in the Middle Ages, but was annexed by the French in 1681. So when Prussian forces attacked it in 1870, they destroyed a city that was still largely German-speaking, and a library that contained monuments to their medieval past.

Another complicated case was that of the State Archives of Naples. When Italy entered the Second World War in 1940, that archive's medieval documents were moved to a villa 20 miles from the city, to safeguard them from US and British bombing. But in September 1943, when Italy – formerly a German ally – switched sides, fighting broke out between German forces in Italy and the Italian resistance.

On 28 September, German troops came across the villa, and were suspicious of the crates stored inside. Though Italian officials declared that they contained only historical documents, that didn't stop the Germans from burning the villa to the ground. Everything went up in smoke – material that wouldn't have been there if it hadn't been first evacuated from Allied bombing in Naples. This story highlights how the complexity of modern national politics has placed history at risk.

In these cases, what was done to save the written material?

In the run-up to the centenary of the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland in 2022, there was an enormous international effort to see what could be saved, starting with examining remaining physical fragments. Fortunately, three years before the explosion, the head of the Public Record Office in Ireland – little knowing what would soon happen – had produced a wonderful catalogue. So, though we no longer have the records, we at least have a guide to what was once there.

Over the course of several hundred years prior to 1922, quite a lot of learned people had worked on the manuscript material, making copies and describing it, so that was looked at. Additionally, in the Middle Ages Ireland had been a colony of England, so much of the documentation – or duplicates of it – produced by the Irish government was sent to England, where any surviving material now resides in the National Archives in Kew.

This project also launched a website, with a 3D reconstruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland as it was before the destruction.



In flames Fire rages in Dublin's 'Four Courts', housing the Public Record Office of Ireland, in 1922. Many historical documents were destroyed in the conflagration

// It would be rash to start destroying physical paper records. We rely on this material to build up our past; we can reconstruct it only from what survives //

You can go to any of the shelves and see what was stored there prior to 1922 – a magnificent effort.

In Naples, after the war they did exactly what the Irish project did. They knew the documents had been studied for a long time before the war, and that there'd be scholars who had notes, transcriptions and copies. So they contacted these people all over Europe, and things were indeed sent in. You can no longer study something from 1285; instead, you must work with a copy from 1910.

It's a matter of saving what there is – by the skin of the teeth, sometimes. In some cases, of course, the stuff has gone forever.

What can be done to remedy the loss of illustrative material?

One document that was in the Strasbourg Municipal Library in 1870 was a book called *Hortus deliciarum* (*Garden of Delights*), produced in the late 12th century in a nunnery not far from Strasbourg. This beautiful book, one of the jewels of medieval German book illustration, was destroyed by the German shelling.

We do have some copies of those illustrations that had been made in the 19th century, prior to the destruction, by the memorably named Comte de Bastard [Count Bastard], a military man from a poor noble family in the south of France. Having fought for Napoleon and the restored Bourbon monarchs, he taught himself lithography, a printing technique invented in the 1790s. He reproduced not only *Garden of Delights* but also other beautifully coloured medieval illuminated manuscripts. The French state, which saw his work as being of national benefit, gave him financial aid. He even lent some of his copies to the Great Exhibition in London in 1851.

Today, if you want to study medieval German book illustration, you can't go to the original of this work, which is now long disintegrated. Instead, you have to go to Count Bastard's lithographs – that's all we have. He's a real hero.

Who else would you consider a hero in this field?

My heroes might seem rather unheroic. They tend to be cataloguers, archivists and antiquarians – often middle-aged men with glasses. Count Bastard, though also a man of action, was one of these.

Another was Maurice Jusselin, who was an archivist in Chartres, which was bombed in the lead-up to D-Day. There was a complicated and strange contrast between what was done with these manuscripts and the efforts made to safeguard the stained-glass windows of Chartres Cathedral.

At the start of the Second World War, the windows were packed up and sent several hundred miles away to the cellars of a castle in the middle of nowhere, so they all survived the war. People in charge of the library and its books at first decided to do something similar, moving them to a villa about 20 miles away. Of course, in 1940, the Germans conquered France. After a while, they appointed someone to take charge of the historical and literary monuments of France. He promised that the books would be safe back in the library – so, at the end of 1940, they were a sitting target for the bombing that took place in the run-up to D-Day. Hundreds of medieval manuscripts were destroyed.



The Middle Ages under attack

You can hear an extended version of this interview on our podcast soon: historyextra.com/podcast



learned about the Ebstorf Map after it was destroyed. We've learned all we can about it; the benefit of technological advancement cannot help us there. Yet, still, the technology of warfare advances.

How has our knowledge of the Middle Ages been affected by the destruction of such fragile resources?

I suppose the truth is that we don't know what we don't know. But sometimes we can get little indications.

Take the first English royal accounts, called pipe rolls. The very earliest dates from 1130 – a rare survival. It mentions payments made by royal authority, sent out in writs; hundreds of those are recorded, but none survive. Though we don't have those documents themselves, we do have indirect evidence of proto-bureaucratic state activity from references in that pipe roll. That's one way you can go from the known to the unknown.

Of course, when studying any medieval document, you always have to bear in mind that it's just the tip of an iceberg. But how big is the iceberg? How big is the stuff we don't know about?

It's been said many times, for example, that the written material we have makes writing the history of the lower classes, women and dissidents harder than writing the history of rulers and men. It's an inbuilt bias to be aware of. But that's probably true of any historical period, I'd have thought.

Medievalists often seem to be picking through tiny pieces of evidence to better understand their period. What value is there to be found in small fragments of the past?

If it's all you've got, then that's what you've got to deal with, isn't it? If you think of those studying the ancient world, they're far worse off. Someone calculated the number of Aeschylus's plays that survive today – and about 90 per cent have been lost.

As a historian, I work mainly with written remains – but those are not guaranteed to last forever. The past, insofar as it's transmitted by written material, is vulnerable to disappearing, even now.

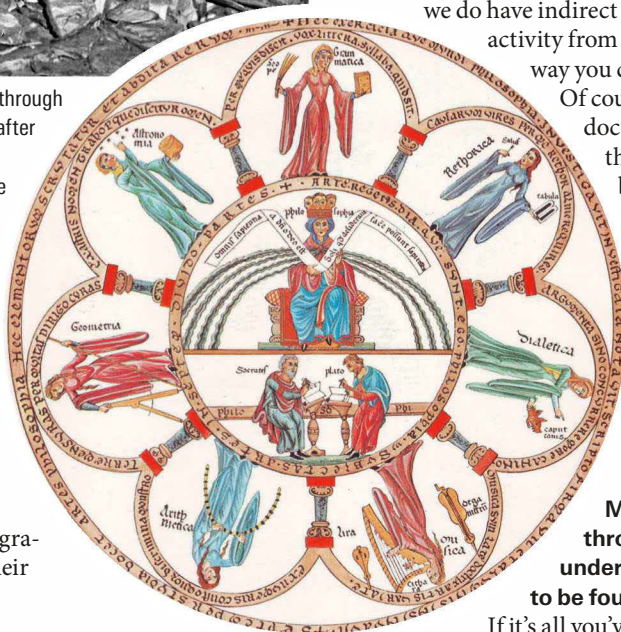
The Ministry of Justice in London has been digitising all last wills and testaments made since 1858, when the government took over this duty from the church. All wills used to be prepared on paper, either handwritten or typewritten. Now the question is being asked: shall we destroy those originals?

In response, the historical community has issued a loud howl – because if you destroy that stuff, you've lost any way of looking at the physical remains. Is digitised technology as secure and as durable and as lasting? Can we be sure that digitised material will still be accessible in 100 years' time? It would be rash to start destroying the physical paper records. What we can lose is very great. We rely on this material to build up our past; we can reconstruct it only from what survives.

Of the documents lost, which would you most like to have seen?

Ah, that's a very interesting question. There are references to literary works that no longer survive – stories of great tales told in the 12th and 13th centuries. We know the titles of some of them. I think I'd like to read those stories. **H**

Burning books ABOVE: A workman sifts through the wrecked library of Lambeth Palace, London after German bombing in 1941. RIGHT: A copy of an illustration from *Hortus deliciarum*, lost when the Municipal Library in Strasbourg was destroyed by Prussian forces in 1870



Jusselin had been a pioneer of aviation and, before the First World War, he had taken aerial pictures of Chartres Cathedral. But he was also very interested in the manuscripts in Chartres, and took plenty of photographs of those, too. So, even after the loss of the original manuscripts, palaeographers and historians could still apply their scholarly eyes to the content and script.

Who's winning the race between preservation and destruction?

More money has gone into artillery, high explosives and bombers than has gone into finding suitable places to store medieval documents. There's no question – the race is definitely one-sided. On the other hand, the amount of historical work done by archivists, librarians, scholars and antiquarians, especially in the past couple of hundred years, is extremely impressive.

Even where the loss of an original document is total, there's hope. Perhaps my most dramatic example is the so-called Ebstorf Map, which was in Hanover when that German city was bombed by the Royal Air Force during the Second World War. It was the largest known map from the Middle Ages, measuring more than 3 metres by 3 metres. It was a Mappa Mundi, a term often associated with the great medieval map in Hereford – though that example was made using only one animal skin, whereas Ebstorf's required 30.

In the 1890s, the Ebstorf Map was disassembled, and each skin was photographed on a slightly reduced scale. By putting those images together, you can see what the map was like. Frustratingly, it does seem as though someone might have done a bit of touching up with a pen. Nevertheless, these scraps can tell us something.

The technology of reproduction and analysis is always getting more sophisticated. But you can learn new things about old documents only if the physical remains still exist, right? Nothing new can be



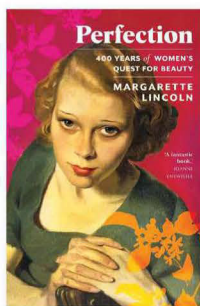
Old tropes

Thomas Rowlandson's 1792 print satirises various tactics used by women attempting to adhere to contemporary ideals of 'beauty'

SOCIAL

Aesthetic endeavours

FREYA GOWRLEY is impressed by a detailed, thought-provoking work exploring the methods and social context of women's attempts to achieve 'beauty'



Perfection: 400 Years of Women's Quest for Beauty
by Marguerite Lincoln
Yale, 368pp, £25

In 2016, a pernicious meme emerged on social media, encouraging men to take a prospective girlfriend "swimming on the first date". The implication was that the woman's make-up would be washed off, revealing her beauty – or lack thereof. Secure in the knowledge that he was not being deceived,

the man could continue to date that woman free from doubt about her 'true' looks.

It was no coincidence that this rhetorical device emerged at a time when a 'full beat' (a term borrowed from drag parlance) was popular. Spearheaded by social media and beauty YouTubers, this developed into a look characterised by the application of heavy make-up, with contoured cheeks, perfectly lined matte lips and copious winged eyeliner topped with a spray of false eyelashes. Though, like all make-up trends, the popularity of this specific look ebbed and flowed, it nevertheless came to exemplify a kind of beauty application that allowed women to become the duplicitous mistresses of male

affection. This meme has now died a welcome death – yet its sentiments can still be found online, on forums populated by incels [involuntarily celibate people] who criticise those they deem to be overly made-up women as sexually available 'Staceys'.

This narrative is not a recent invention. As far back as the early 18th century, writers such as Jonathan Swift cruelly satirised the potentially deceitful nature of a woman's appearance. His 1719 poem *The Progress of Beauty* recounts the rituals of beautification necessary to transform the dirty, spotty and wrinkled Diana into a "Lovely Nymph". Like the 2016 meme, it reflects a longstanding distrust of cosmetics as a transformative

// As far back as the early 18th century, Jonathan Swift cruelly satirised the potentially deceitful nature of a woman's appearance //

device that can be used to hide an ugly truth.

Swift's poem, along with contemporary satirical prints by artists such as Thomas Rowlandson, are cited in the introduction of Margarette Lincoln's engrossing new book. Focusing primarily on the western world from the 18th century onward, *Perfection* seeks to chart women's pursuit of beauty, whether by choice or as the product of the chauvinistic cultures in which they lived.

The book assumes a thematic rather than chronological structure. The first chapter explores body modification through dress, discussing stays, corsets and girdles as supportive structures, regulatory garments and moralising buttressing. Meanwhile, Lincoln asks a question that is key throughout her book: is adherence to a certain appearance imposed on women, or is it something within their own agentic power that allows them to take control of their bodies?

As with all complex questions, the answer is somewhere between the two, and Lincoln does well to sketch the various contours of support and criticism of the beauty regimes deployed by her historical subjects. For example, Chapter 2 charts the emergence of diet culture, from nascent ideas of physical perfection in the 18th century through to the late 1990s, considering arguments for and against the restriction of food consumption. Reflecting on the enduring nature of these concerns, Lincoln writes compellingly about how the joyful pursuit of fitness, which once promised autonomy, can all too easily become the tool of a new form of oppression.

Later chapters cover skin and make-up, traversing a shifting landscape of economic opportunity and genuine technological innovation on the one hand, and fraudulent (and often dangerous) solutions peddled by tricksters on the other. Further sections on hygiene, teeth and hair show how encompassing the notion of feminine beauty is and was, with every possible aspect of the human body subject to strictly enforced ideals to attain this

standard. The final chapter, discussing the rise of spa towns and sea bathing, reflects Lincoln's expertise as a maritime historian, and is a welcome addition to the holistic array of practices sketched here.

Enduring relevance

As well as exploring the aforementioned topics in depth, this book is a veritable treasure trove of anecdote and amusing detail. Using an array of sources such as advertisements, magazines, medical tracts, satirical texts and images, journals and diaries, Lincoln paints a comprehensive picture of women's beauty treatments and complementary concerns. And she doesn't overlook the darker sides of these pursuits: she discusses the ingestion of arsenic, designed to elicit fair complexions, as well as starvation undertaken to achieve the slim-mest of silhouettes.

In mining these sources, *Perfection* makes clear the relevance of rituals of beautification to the construction of femininity and our understanding of the body.

Though ostensibly about the shallowest of pursuits, this book has undeniable relevance for the present day, inviting reflection on the continuing legacies of views developed over four centuries. Such ideas have undoubtedly helped women to shape their identities and sense of self, but they have also contributed to racist, fatphobic, misogynistic and dehumanising discourses that retain cultural currency even in contemporary society.

Covering such important material, this book provides an opportunity to think about what the future of that discourse might encompass, and how we might reflect upon beauty and its construction going forward. Yet this area of thinking is limited to an epilogue; as a result, discussions of social media and the contemporary beauty industry (estimated to be worth around £350bn in 2022) are relegated to a cursory exploration spanning only a few pages. Deeper consideration of the role of the body positivity movement are absent, and discussions of disability and beauty, female masculinity, the development of scientific racism, and the representation of the female body in pornography all feel like important omissions.

Despite those caveats, Lincoln's text is an absorbing read, rich in meticulously researched examples subjected to nuanced and balanced consideration. This one-stop cornucopia of 400 years of beauty secrets will surely become a go-to read for anyone interested in understanding the enduring quest for female perfection. **H**

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Freya Gowrley is lecturer in the history of art and liberal arts at the University of Bristol

ON THE PODCAST

Stitches in time

Deputy editor **Matt Elton** picks three episodes of the HistoryExtra podcast on fashion and style

In vogue



Throughout history, people have gone to great lengths to ensure they're in step with the latest styles. In a 2022 interview, health and beauty historian Lucy Jane Santos tackled popular web

search queries and listener questions about centuries of looking good, from ancient cosmetics to the risky use of scientific innovations such as X-rays. historyextra.com/beauty-everything

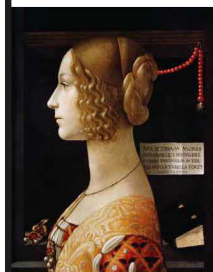
Tudor trends



We're all familiar with the bejewelled bodices and frilled collars sported by well-to-do Tudors in portraits of the era. But how many garments did the average person actually own?

Would expectant mothers have worn special clothes? And were codpieces really as ubiquitous as we now think? Find out in an entertaining conversation with expert Jane Malcolm-Davies. historyextra.com/tudor-clothes

Renaissance beauty



The pursuit of physical beauty has always had a dark side – and that was certainly true in the Renaissance era. Our interview with art historian and writer Jill Burke delves into some of

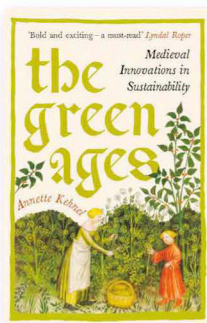
these dangers, exploring the psychological impact of the period's exacting physical ideals and the social consequences that often lay in wait for people who rejected them.

historyextra.com/renaissance-beauty

MEDIEVAL

How to live your best life – the medieval way

PETER FRANKOPAN is inspired by a clear-eyed examination of attitudes and ideas from the Middle Ages that can offer guidance for sustainable living in our modern world



The Green Ages: Medieval Innovations in Sustainability
by Annette Kehnel
Profile Books,
352 pages, £25

“We are facing a watershed moment,” writes the German

historian Annette Kehnel at the start of this engaging book. The world is faced with increasingly limited resources, growing injustice and proliferating horrors at a time when “we find ourselves gradually running out of ideas”. The best thing to do, says Kehnel, is to think about how to find a “new vision for the future”. And, she writes, the best way to do that is to look to the past.

The Green Ages was originally published in Germany in 2021 with the title *Wie konnten auch anders* – ‘How can it be otherwise’. Although the book sounds, and often reads, like a manifesto for the world of today, it is in fact a more interesting exploration of how societies in the past thought about and treated topics that sound very modern – subjects such as recycling, sustainability and micro-finance.

Kehnel’s book is aimed at a millennial audience, with regular references to things such as Bitcoin (which is compared to tally sticks), carbon emissions trading (likened to the sale of indulgences by the church), ‘fake news’ and the #MeToo movement. Though that might leave some historians reaching for the smelling salts, these parallels can be entertaining and make for an enjoyable read. Saint Francis of Assisi, for example, “never missed an opportunity to party”. We see that preachers were like influencers today – people who spoke with passion and yet often had their own interests at heart.

Underneath the pithy comments lies a serious book that, time and again, delves into questions and topics that can be easily overlooked. Why was it, for example, that Lake Constance was not overfished over the

// Preachers were like influencers today – people who spoke with passion and yet often had their own interests at heart //

course of history? What were markets for second-hand goods like in centuries past, or for ones that had been mended or modified? Where did ordinary people in Basel borrow money, and what did they use it for? What was used as collateral for loans, how were records kept, and what happened in the case of defaults on debts?

Kehnel focuses on western Europe – Switzerland, in particular. Though her book features sections on Diogenes (whose disavowal of luxuries, says the author, would be described today as ‘performance art’), her case studies and examples are drawn primarily from the medieval world.

People from that period would “envy us a lot” today, writes Kehnel at the end, and be “amazed at how comfortable our lives are” – though would likely be appalled at “our

constant need to shop”, and by our willingness to relax in “overheated sitting rooms” or to sit still for many hours on long-haul flights.

Kehnel writes with passion. “What has motivated us humans across the millennia is not only the desire for more – expansion, profit, power,” she proclaims. In fact, she says, “what has also driven us is the desire for simplicity and freedom.”

If that strikes a rather hopeful note then so, too, might the entreaty that we should be more like monastic communities of the past, or might follow the teachings in Chapter 66 of the *Rule of Saint Benedict* – to be self-sufficient.

History, says the author, “offers not so much inspiration as crystal-clear guidelines” on how to create circular economies. Such optimism does not come naturally to many historians, so Annette Kehnel is to be commended for a zippy, fresh book that reminds us that history can be a treasure trove – if one looks in the right places and asks the right questions. **H**

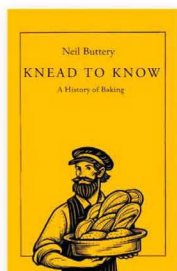
Peter Frankopan is professor of global history at the University of Oxford, where he is senior research fellow at Worcester College. His most recent book is *The Earth Transformed: An Untold History* (Bloomsbury, 2023)



Field research Harvest time, illustrated in a 13th-century German manuscript. A new book explores medieval attitudes to sustainability and other aspects of daily life, work and business

FOOD

All rise



Knead to Know: A History of Baking by Neil Buttery

Icon Books, 256 pages, £12.99

This encyclopaedic tour of baked goods and their origins begins back in c12,000 BC, when hunter-

gatherers cooked flat breads made from wheat, barley and mashed roots on hot stones. Moving through the history of griddle cakes and pancakes, the book then tackles an incredible array of breads, biscuits and cakes, pies and puddings, finishing (as a literary dessert) with more-luxurious patisserie bakes.

Along the way, Buttery highlights a huge wealth of forgotten – and delicious – recipes, techniques and ingredients, his book functioning, at least in part, as a call to bring them back. We should be dipping our Madeira cake in sweet Madeira wines, for example. And how sad that we have lost the early modern art of adding a caudle (a kind of custard of cream, sugar and eggs) to our fruit pies. There are also some amazing, less-known regional dishes to savour, such as the Bedfordshire clanger, with its savoury and sweet halves.

Buttery also shares and then rightly dismisses many origin myths: Eton mess was not born when a too-energetic labrador sat



Ancient grains A model from ancient Egypt shows a baker kneading and rolling dough. A new book takes readers on a journey through the history of baking, right back to hunter-gatherers preparing food 14,000 years ago

on a pavlova at Eton College's annual cricket match, for example, but was simply the invention of a creative cook in the school's kitchens.

Researching the origins of so many foods is a remarkable feat, and Buttery's background as a scientist enables him to provide detailed insights into the chemistry of nutrition, digestion and cooking techniques, too.

Those interested primarily in history rather than baking may find the structure a little limiting, jumping back and forth in time rather than immersing readers in any particular era. At points, the breadth of the subject means that the narrative feels a little dry; the

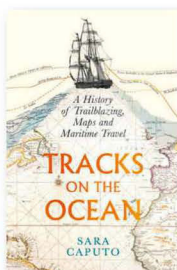
matter-of-fact nature of the introduction, in particular, doesn't do enough to celebrate the richness and playfulness of the topic.

That said, there's plenty to delight and discover in the full-flavoured combination of historical and practical food knowledge. It's a book to dip into rather than read cover to cover, and will appeal most to the home cook who will certainly, as the author contends, find it helps them become a better baker. **H**

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Eleanor Barnett, food historian at Cardiff University. Her latest book is *Leftovers: A History of Food Waste and Preservation* (Apollo, 2024)

MARITIME

Making waves



Tracks on the Ocean: A History of Trailblazing, Maps and Maritime Travel by Sara Caputo

Profile, 320 pages, £30

A history of the modern world told through the routes marked on maps

of the sea is a brilliant idea – and one executed here as well as it was conceived.

From ancient itineraries to the disruption of supply chains during the Covid-19 pandemic, we are shown our world through new eyes. In the chapter 'Countertracks', author Sara Caputo points out the ways in which tracks on charts and maps can be unhelpfully persuasive, marked confidently – whereas,

in fact, there are always hidden discrepancies and tensions. Who had the authority to 'claim' a route? Who didn't – and why?

Alternative views of the world – and paths across and around it – continued to exist in spite of any new, clearly marked map. In addition, powerful societal forces dictated how you might feel about drawing such a track on a chart. This is all part of a historical approach that examines the gaps in things – in which the holes in the Swiss cheese are as important as the cheese itself.

Caputo makes her point by telling the story of Emma Hotchkiss of Gloucester, Massachusetts, who was just 15 when she sailed from Calcutta (now Kolkata) to Bordeaux in 1856. Her father, the captain, fell ill, so the multi-skilled Emma stepped up. She helped "mark off our track of this voyage on another one"; later, when left alone, she became fearful of making a mistake. The conclusion and implication is clear: though

tracks were used by just a few, mostly men, they were made by many – not all male.

Another significant point is that marking routes engenders a sense of occupation and entitlement: make a track, own a track. This leads to all sorts of problems – colonialism being one, pollution another. "Tracks," Caputo writes, "do act as individual signatures, but as individual signatures on a crippling loan." In some cases, tracks have led to (and indicate the sources of) years of ecological damage caused by specific actors and countries, which historical evidence and historians can hold to account.

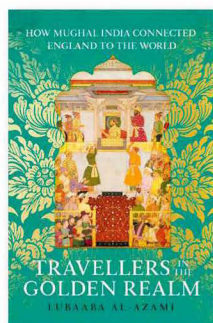
Caputo's book is a triumph of the study of movement over what was once a "trackless world", and an act of impressive scholarship. It should, however, also make us consider how all of this movement impacted the beginnings and ends of the tracks. **H**

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Sam Willis, historian, broadcaster and author

INDIA

Passages to India

DAVID VEEVERS applauds a revisionist exploration of early contact between the Mughal empire and English visitors that provides novel perspectives on those pivotal encounters



Travellers in the Golden Realm: How Mughal India Connected England to the World

by Lubaaba Al-Azami
John Murray, 320 pages, £25

When we think of early English encounters with India, we

might conjure up images of the haughty aristocrat Sir Thomas Roe, the ambassador sent by James VI & I in 1615 to the court of the Mughals, where he spent his time sneering down his nose at the “overgrown elephant”, as he termed their empire. Or the gruff and frequently inebriated William Hawkins almost a decade earlier, drinking the Emperor Jahangir under the table in his quest to win the East India Company coveted trading privileges on the subcontinent.

Before these national and corporate efforts to trade and establish settlements in India, English people had arrived in the Mughal empire in unexpected ways. The very first to reach India by sea, in fact, was Father Thomas Stephens, a Catholic Englishman travelling aboard a Portuguese ship in 1579 to join the Jesuits in Goa, where he proselytised to Hindu and Muslim alike – on behalf not of England or the East India Company but of Christ.

Such surprising and little-known accounts spring from the pages of a captivating new book by Lubaaba Al-Azami. She has so many new stories to reveal about this earliest period of Anglo-Indian contact that she pushes us to reconsider that relationship altogether. Her book joins a growing chorus of revisionist histories that dare us to disentangle our colonially framed thinking about the relationship between England and India in this earlier period. It shakes off the perspectives that compel us to see the British Raj of the 19th century rather than the far less-capable and less-confident 17th-century England that participated in these first encounters.

Al-Azami’s book blows past John Darwin’s suggestion of “equilibrium” and his fellow historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s “contained conflict” that position east and west on equal footing. Instead it centres the

dazzling sophistication and power of the Mughal world to reveal it as something almost beyond the comprehension of supplicant English visitors. Rather than making demands and setting the terms of encounter, these early travellers marvelled at India’s riches, were wowed by Mughal culture and were left virtually dumbfounded at their own inability to master its complexities.

Most refreshingly, this is not a book about the English in India but a book about India at the time of the English arrival. Where so many histories make Mughal India the object

of English gazes, Al-Azami has rendered the Mughal world and its inhabitants in such vivid, three-dimensional detail that the reader slips comfortably into the Mughal perspective to share that view of the newly arrived, strange and fumbling English.

Switching the gaze catapults the story into intriguing territory. For instance, it shows us how much of the early Anglo-Indian encounter was conducted through and by the women of the Mughal world. These figures range from queen mothers who owned the largest trading ships in the Indian Ocean and exercised power over emperors and diplomats, to Armenian Christian courtiers married off to visiting English merchant-diplomats to integrate them into Mughal culture.

Al-Azami has produced a must-read account of the most consequential encounter in English colonial history. Her version undercuts the colonial discourse that, in many ways, continues to pervade our understanding of that encounter today. **H**

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David Veevers is lecturer in early modern history at Bangor University

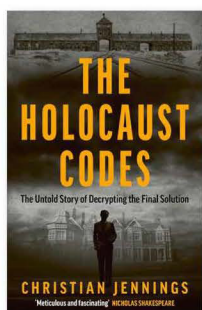
// This book shows us how much of the early Anglo-Indian encounter was conducted through women of the Mughal world //



Journey to the east An illustration in a 16th-century manuscript commissioned by the Mughal emperor Akbar. A new book highlights “the dazzling sophistication and power of the Mughal world”, says David Veevers

Holocaust decrypted

LISA PINE hails a look at the role of Allied codebreakers in shedding light on the horrors of the Nazi death camps



The Holocaust Codes: The Untold Story of Decrypting the Final Solution

by Christian Jennings
John Blake, 368 pages, £22

This excellent and important book helps us understand both the

complexities of wartime ciphers and how decoding them gave the Allies significant information about the Holocaust. Central to this story is the “kaleidoscopic mix of coded sources” from across many countries, dubbed the “Holocaust Codes” by the author.

Christian Jennings’ book begins with the dramatic description of a reconnaissance sortie on 4 April 1944 by a De Havilland Mosquito of the South African Air Force. The crew was tasked with photographing the IG Farben plant at Monowitz in Poland. Crucially, however, it also returned with images of Auschwitz-Birkenau. These were the first Allied aerial shots of the Nazi death camp.

They did not, however, come as a complete surprise to the British and Americans. As Jennings explains: “A select handful of intelligence and government officials in London and Washington” already had some detailed information about the Nazi camps. And this knowledge had been gained through the cryptanalysis – decryption – of encoded Nazi signals.

The Nazis went to great lengths to keep their atrocities hidden from the world. They used the phrase ‘special handling’ as a euphemism for the mass murder of European Jews in gas chambers. They also employed a cipher known as Code Orange to send signals from inside the concentration camp system. Yet, as Jennings explains, the Allies were one step ahead of them, successfully intercepting and decrypting the code. In doing so, they garnered specific details about the Nazi camps, including their administration reports and lists of inmates.

In January 1943, the British intercepted the Höfle telegram, which detailed the number of Jewish victims at each of the Majdanek, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka death camps up to the end of 1942.

Significantly, too, in June 1944 Bletchley Park decrypted a signal from a Polish official to a Hungarian colleague about the gassing of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz.

Chief among the British codebreakers was Nigel de Grey who, along with his colleagues at Bletchley Park, played a key role in bringing the ‘Final Solution’ to light.

As Jennings points out, though, this is also a story of indecision and disbelief. In August 1942, Gerhart Riegner, the representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland, walked into the US and British consulates in Geneva with a telegram that conveyed Hitler’s intentions to exterminate Europe’s Jews. Yet instead of provoking an immediate, muscular response, Riegner’s telegram was met with vacillation, characterised by half-hearted attempts to verify its contents. In fact, it was only at the end of that year – after the British press had begun reporting the Nazis’ mass murder – that Allied governments made a commitment “to ensure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution”.

The Allied authorities also failed to publicise or act upon Bletchley Park’s growing revelations about the Nazis’ murderous acts, deeming it more important to protect Ultra, the Allied intelligence project that tapped encrypted German communications.

As Jennings reveals, British and American codebreakers did not focus their efforts only on the Nazis. *The Holocaust Codes* also tells the story of what the author describes as an interconnected “international matrix of decipherment” that saw the Allies cracking the Vatican’s diplomatic code.

Throughout the book, Jennings carefully intertwines a narration of the unfolding of the ‘Final Solution’ with a discussion of the complex nature of encipherment and decoding. In doing so, he has written a compelling book that will fascinate readers wanting to know more about the Second World War, the secret intelligence battle waged between the combatants, and how a small group of men and women across the Allied nations shed light on the horrors of the Holocaust. **H**

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Lisa Pine is associate fellow of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, and author of *Dictatorship and Daily Life in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Bloomsbury, 2022)

FROM FACT TO FICTION

Historical notes

Harriet Constable (pictured) discusses *The Instrumentalist*, her novel about a violin prodigy

What drew you to the story of Anna Maria della Pietà, a student of Vivaldi?

When I found the story of the students taught by Vivaldi at the Venetian orphanage, I was hooked. These women and girls, missing eyes and toes and scarred from the pox, were fundamental to the development of his music. Anna Maria was his favourite: he wrote music and bought a violin for her. She was one of the great violinists of the 18th century – a woman we should never have forgotten.

How did you convey a sense of the atmosphere of this time and place?

Venice at the turn of the 18th century was such a vivid and exciting place. Because I make films, I wrote in scenes and tried to give everything a cinematic feel. I wanted to plunge my readers into the Republic, sweeping with a gull from the fish market across the terracotta roofs and into the stifling rooms of the Pietà, or standing on the cracked roof with Anna Maria as she conducts to the sounds of the city.

How did you imagine the relationship between student and teacher?

There must have been a fascinating power dynamic between Vivaldi and Anna Maria. He was a maestro, and her teacher; she was the prodigy with a raw talent that threatened to eclipse his own. I started thinking about how toxic that might be in the context of the Pietà, where the girls do not have parents, or love, and where the possibility of not making it is too awful to abide. What might they be willing to do to survive?

What new impression of her would you like to leave with readers?

Anna Maria and her orphan sisters were not mere muses, sitting pretty while singular genius Vivaldi whipped up his next invention. They were active participants in the work of developing a whole new form of music: the concerto.

The Instrumentalist

by Harriet Constable
Bloomsbury, 336 pages, £16.99



ENCOUNTERS

DIARY By Jonathan Wright and Danny Bird
HISTORY COOKBOOK Pumpkin pie
EXPLORE Antrim Castle, Northern Ireland
CITIES Cape Town, South Africa

FILM

Lonely at the top

Katherine Parr was the wife of Henry VIII who, as the rhyme has it, survived. Less well remembered is that, in the summer of 1544 – while Henry VIII was campaigning in France – she was appointed regent. But when the ageing and increasingly paranoid king returned to England, the queen herself came under threat, suspected of harbouring dangerously radical Protestant beliefs.

Based on Elizabeth Fremantle's 2013 novel *Queen's Gambit*, the English-language debut from acclaimed Brazilian director Karim Aïnouz offers an unfamiliar slant on Tudor power plays by putting Parr, shown as a fiercely intelligent stateswoman, at the centre of events. Alicia Vikander stars as the queen, Jude Law plays Henry, and Simon Russell Beale plays Bishop Stephen Gardiner, a religious conservative with beliefs rooted in Catholicism.

Firebrand

In cinemas / Friday 6 September



Alicia Vikander plays Katherine Parr in new film *Firebrand*. This novel take on Tudor history highlights the intelligence and agency of the sixth and final wife of Henry VIII



What's on this week?

Visit [historyextra.com](https://www.historyextra.com) for updates on upcoming history TV and radio programmes



EXHIBITIONS

Life Through a Royal Lens

Hillsborough Castle, County Down, Northern Ireland /
Until 27 October / hrp.org.uk

Over the past two centuries, the British royal family has embraced photography. Featuring more than 60 iconic images by the likes of Rankin, Cecil Beaton and Annie Leibovitz, this exhibition explores the stories behind the snapshots. Discover how photography has transformed royal portraiture, creating a personal connection with the public and projecting the monarchy's sense of duty and familiarity.

War and the Mind

Imperial War Museum London /
27 September 2024–27 April 2025 /
iwm.org.uk

Offering a glimpse into the psychological impacts of conflicts since the early 20th century, this exhibition features more than 150 objects including recruitment and protest posters, personal letters, amphetamine tablets for fatigued soldiers (inset) and a baby's mitten carried by a Lancaster bomber rear gunner. Exploring motives and coping mechanisms, it also seeks to understand the legacy of conflict.

Hard Graft: Work, Health and Rights

Wellcome Collection, London / 19 September 2024–
27 April 2025 / wellcomecollection.org

This new exhibition, featuring more than 150 objects, charts the health impacts of physical labour in plantations, streets and domestic spaces, emphasising ongoing inequalities in the workplace. Highlights include Maria Sibylla Merian's beautiful book on the insects of Suriname, which was influenced by enslaved women in that Dutch colony, and the 1877 photobook *Street Life in London* by John Thomson and Adolphe Smith. **H**



A woman prepares vegetables in 1919. A new exhibition charts the health impacts of work



A new BBC documentary on Elizabeth Taylor reveals her diverse endeavours

TV

A new kind of star

Fiery relationship with Richard Burton and multiple marriages. Alcoholism. A love of diamonds. There's plenty we *think* we know about Elizabeth Taylor but, suggests a new three-part documentary series, this is a soap opera version of a fascinating figure. Taylor was a woman whom we might equally remember for defying convention, for creating a blueprint for modern celebrity, for her activism and business acumen, and, lest we forget, for performances that garnered two Academy Awards.

Alongside archive material, contributors offering their insights include Kim Kardashian, executive producer of the programmes and the last person to interview Taylor; Dame Joan Collins; and Dr Anthony Fauci, who worked with the actor in the campaign against Aids.

Elizabeth Taylor: Rebel Superstar

BBC Two / Late September



Former Royal Marine Arthur Williams appears in a new series exploring how national borders in Europe have been defined over time

TV

Lines of defence

How have the national borders of European nations come to be defined? In part, as a new documentary series explores, by keeping out invaders, whether through the construction of fortifications or by developing new weapons and military strategies.

Each of the six episodes in the series focuses on a different country, with the first looking at the UK. Stories explored in this

programme include battlefield archaeologist Tony Pollard's account of a brutal medieval siege at Rochester Castle, and former Royal Marine Arthur Williams taking to the air to get a bird's-eye view of sea forts that were once thought to be key to the nation's defence.

Defending Europe

National Geographic / Monday 16 September



Kate Winslet plays Lee Miller in a new biopic of the groundbreaking model-turned-photographer and war correspondent

FILM

Pioneering figure

Lee Miller (1907–77) lived an extraordinary and varied life. After forging a career as a model in New York, she decamped to Paris where she became Man Ray's collaborator and muse. Later she turned her hand to commercial photography and then, in 1942, set out to chronicle the Second World War for *Vogue*. She was present when Paris was liberated, recorded the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps and, famously, was

pictured in the bathtub of Adolf Hitler's apartment in Munich.

Lee, the debut feature from cinematographer Ellen Kuras, stars Kate Winslet in the title role. The supporting cast includes Alexander Skarsgård as British surrealist artist Roland Penrose, Miller's second husband.

Lee

In cinemas / Friday 13 September

RADIO HIGHLIGHTS

Bleak vision

At 9.30pm on 23 September 1984, one of the eeriest dramas ever shown on television received its first British transmission. "In an urban society, everything connects," noted the narrator of *Threads*, a prelude to an account of the effects of nuclear war and a subsequent nuclear winter on Sheffield. It was the bleakest of visions of a future that, during the Cold War, seemed all too plausible. *Threads* (pictured) had a huge cultural impact, both on those who saw it at the time and those who sought it out afterwards. The latter include Jude Rogers, who presents **Archive on 4: Reweaving Threads, 40 Years On** (BBC Radio 4, Saturday 21 September), an atmospheric documentary that mixes voices from the past with new interviews.



Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is a classic castaway novel, a story of adventure, hardship and isolation largely set on a tropical desert island. It's also a story of a cross-cultural collision between Crusoe and the man who becomes his companion, 'Friday'. But what did Friday make of Crusoe? Defoe's novel has little to say here, leaving plenty of space for writer Edson Burton's reworking of the story, **Man Friday** (BBC Radio 4, Sunday 22 September), to show us events from the perspective of a Ghanaian man whose real name is Kofi.

Why do so many of us don shorts and trainers to run? It's a question considered in **On the Run** (BBC Radio 4, Monday 23 September), a series that looks at the history of going fast on foot, beginning in prehistoric times.

The life of community worker and activist Sybil Phoenix (right) – born in 1927 in British Guiana, now Guyana, and who came to the UK in 1956 – has been remarkable by any standards. This is not least because of her Zelig-like presence at so many key moments in the black British experience, including the infamous New Cross fire in 1981, as **Sybil Phoenix: A Civil Life** (BBC Radio 4, Sunday 25 August) relates. **H**



Apollo 13 astronauts head for their spacecraft in the run up to the launch of that mission – which almost proved catastrophic

TV

Against the odds

On 11 April 1970, less than a year after Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon, Apollo 13 blasted off from Kennedy Space Center. Some 56 hours after launch, a disastrous explosion occurred. As the world looked on, astronauts Jim Lovell, Jack Swigert and Fred Haise were forced to use their lunar landing module as a 'lifeboat' to bring them back to Earth.

It's a story endlessly retold but always worth revisiting. A new documentary draws on recordings made during the mission, as well as interviews from the archives with the crew, families of the astronauts, and those on the ground who worked round the clock to help bring the men home safely. **H**

Apollo 13: Survival

Streaming via Netflix / Thursday 5 September

RECIPE

Pumpion pie

ELEANOR BARNETT recreates a recipe that first appeared in 17th-century England, before taking America by storm

In the culinary world, autumn has become synonymous with pumpkins. All squashes are native to the Americas, and along with corns and beans, they formed the nutritious trio of staple foods known as the 'three sisters', because they flourish when planted together. The pumpkin is the best-known of all the squashes, and archaeologists have found its seeds in tombs in central Mexico that date as far back as 7,000 BC. Native American peoples ate the seeds and used the flesh in a whole host of dishes, saving the dried shells as containers.

Europeans first encountered pumpkins as they colonised the Americas at the end of the 15th century. In Tudor England they were known as 'pompions', from the French 'pompon', and with time were adopted into the diet of the elites.

Today, pumpkins are associated with Halloween, a word that comes from All Hallows' Eve, the eve of the Christian festival of All Hallows' Day on 1 November. People in Ireland marked the Samhain festival at

the end of harvest season by carving 'jack o'lanterns' from turnips and mangelwurzel, with scary faces that represented malign spirits and goblins. Samhain and Halloween merged over time and, with mass Irish immigration into America in the 19th century, the turnips were replaced with native pumpkins before being introduced back into the British Isles.

In North America, the pumpkin also takes centre stage in the autumn Thanksgiving festival in the form of pumpkin pie. Modern recipes mix cooked and puréed pumpkin with eggs, evaporated milk, sugar and spices. These ingredients are baked in an open pastry casing and often topped with whipped cream. But pumpkin pie recipes are actually first found in English cookery books of the 17th century.

The recipe I've recreated here is based on the one published in Hannah Woolley's 1670 cookery book *The Queen-Like Closet* (pumpion is an archaic name for pumpkin). Rather than the custardy modern versions, the pie filling is a mixture of pumpkin, apples, raisins and currants, all expensive ingredients of the time that suggest this dish would have appeared only on wealthy tables.

The earliest English printed recipe for a pumpkin pie from 1658 includes rosemary, thyme, parsley and marjoram, along with cinnamon, nutmeg, pepper and cloves. You could try using any mixture of these herbs and spices. The result is a sweet and colourful dessert that is as delicious today as it was 350 years ago. **H**

Hannah Woolley's 1670s cookery book *The Queen-Like Closet* contains an early recipe for pumpkin pie



Packed with pumpkin, apples, raisins and currants, pumpkin pie would likely have been the preserve of wealthy diners

Serves: 6–8

Difficulty: 3/10

Time taken: 30 mins prep, 1 hour cooking

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small pumpkin (approx 250g pumpkin flesh)
- 2 'sharp' apples
- 2 eggs
- 50g butter (plus extra for frying)
- 40g currants
- 40g raisins
- 40g sugar
- 1 shortcrust pastry sheet (approx 320g)
- 3 tbsp sherry
- 1 handful of thyme, rosemary and parsley

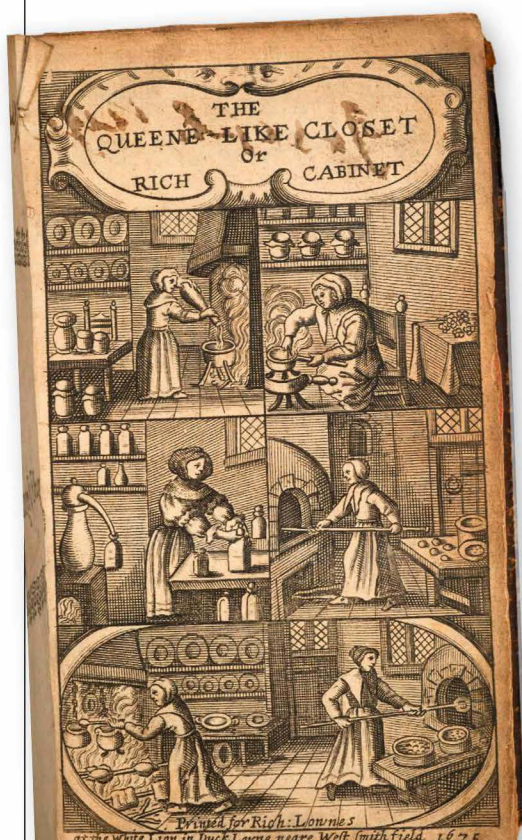
METHOD

1. Preheat your oven to 220°C.
2. Lay out the pastry on the bottom of the pre-buttered pie dish.
3. Peel and thinly slice the pumpkin.
4. Thinly slice the apples and lay on top of the pastry.
5. Beat eggs and mix in the herbs.
6. Dip the pumpkin slices into the egg mixture and fry in butter until soft.
7. Break apart the cooked pumpkin in a separate bowl and mix in half the butter, raisins, currants, sugar and the sherry.
8. Add this mixture on top of the apples in the pie dish and smooth the top.
9. Bake for 15 minutes, then reduce the oven to 180°C for 40–50 minutes.
10. Remove from oven, dot remaining butter on top and eat once melted.



Eleanor Barnett is a food historian at Cardiff University and @Historyeats on Instagram. Her book, *Leftovers: A History of Food Waste and Preservation* (Apollo), is out now

ALAMY/ELEANOR BARNETT





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Ghostly gardens

A castle with roots dating back to the Middle Ages is now a picturesque ruin with gorgeous grounds – and ghosts. **SHANNON DEVLIN** keeps an eye out for spectral hounds and the apparition of an ill-fated ‘White Lady’

A stone’s throw from Lough Neagh, the ruins of Antrim Castle loom starkly over the banks of the Six Mile Water River. It was built on the site of a 12th-century motte and bailey – affectionately nicknamed the ‘Cake’, because of the effect created by the candle-like Scots pine trees – which still provides unparalleled views of one of the largest loughs in the British Isles.

The grounds passed to Sir Hugh Clotworthy in 1606, when he became captain of Lough Neagh. Sir Hugh’s son, John, was made Viscount Massereene in 1660, with Antrim Castle his seat. An imposing new edifice was constructed, with a Georgian Gothic exterior added in 1813.

That castle was gutted by fire in 1922, and only an impressive Italianate tower survives. Today the site, encompassing more than 20 hectares, is best known for its pleasure gardens and water features. The 2nd Viscount Massereene was a keen agricultural innovator, erecting some of the first glass-houses in Ireland. Along with a busy kitchen garden, the castle was where some of the first pineapples in the country were grown, and the gardens’ design reveals the exotic fashions of the Irish upper classes of the era. Two canals, a large round pond, a walking avenue and a formal parterre were added.

In 1757, the teenaged Clotworthy Skeffington became the 2nd Earl of Massereene. He amassed substantial debt, and languished in a French debtors’ prison for nearly two decades, being liberated on 13 July 1789 – the day before the Storming of the Bastille. A dandy and speculator, Skeffington returned to Ireland penniless, but managed to successfully defend Antrim Castle during the 1798 United Irishmen Rebellion against the British

crown. He insisted on a cannon being installed on top of the motte; one cannonball fired along the High Street crashed into the roof of the local church.

By the mid-19th century, the beauty of the pleasure gardens was attracting paying visitors. Excursionists from Belfast arrived on the new railway line built nearby, with Antrim station opening in 1848.

Paranormal activity

Steeped in local lore, Antrim Castle Gardens is a hotspot for paranormal activity. One spectral visitor is the mysterious Irish wolfhound that reputedly saved the life of Lady Marian, the first chatelaine of the castle; the fierce beast is immortalised in a 17th-century statue. Meanwhile, on dark nights a ghostly horse-drawn carriage is said to dash through the grounds before sinking into the long canal pond. And heavy breathing is often heard in quieter parts of the gardens.

The most enduring ghost story has its roots in the castle’s demise. In October 1922, Jean, Viscountess Massereene, was hosting a party when a fire swept through the castle. Though treated as an unfortunate accident at the time, it’s now suspected that the blaze was set by the Irish Republican Army, coming as it did during the Irish Civil War.

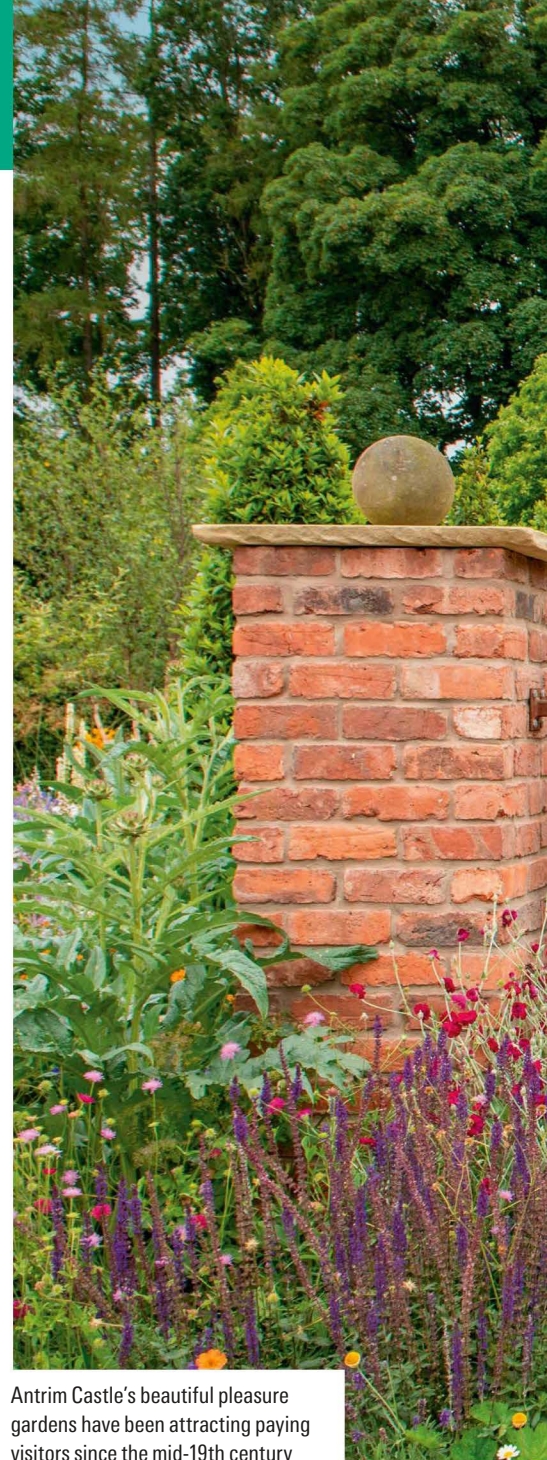
With no local fire brigade available to help, townspeople attempted to evacuate guests, some of whom had to climb down to the lawn from bedroom windows. The only fatality was Ethel Gilligan, a maid whose spirit is still said to roam the grounds as the ‘White Lady’ – which possibly provided comfort for Jean, who was a keen spiritualist and self-professed ghost expert.

The insurance claim was rejected, and this once-beautiful castle was left in ruins. The gardens have since been beautifully restored to their former glory – but the story of Ethel lingers, petrifying children to this day. **H**

Shannon Devlin is lecturer in modern Irish gender history at Ulster University



For more information, head to visitantrimandnewtownabbey.com



Antrim Castle’s beautiful pleasure gardens have been attracting paying visitors since the mid-19th century



This sculpture of an Irish wolfhound, created in c1612, recalls the tale of the dog who reputedly saved Lady Marian from a wolf attack a few years earlier

// On dark nights, a ghostly horse-drawn carriage is said to dash through the grounds //



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF NI

The remains of a 12th-century motte and bailey fortification overlook the Italianate Tower, built in 1887. It is the only surviving element of the castle constructed by the Viscounts Massereene from the 17th century



Antrim Castle – seen here from across the Six Mile Water river c1888 – was the venue for a party hosted by Lady Jean (inset) that was disrupted by fire in 1922

Cape Town in five places

The South African city has both enjoyed great prosperity and endured deep division. **VIVIAN BICKFORD-SMITH** picks five spots offering insights into its diverse past

1 Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden Floral border

This estate, spanning more than 500 hectares on the lower eastern flanks of Table Mountain, features one of the world's most beautifully situated botanical gardens. It's a spectacular living museum of South Africa's flora, showcasing thousands of native species from habitats including savannah and fynbos scrub. Plus there are some dramatic imports, such as an avenue with camphor trees planted by Cecil Rhodes in the 1890s.

Kirstenbosch also encompasses an important historical curiosity: a three-and-a-half-century-old hedge. The city now called Cape Town originated in a settlement established in Table Bay in 1652 by Jan van Riebeeck. It was intended as a temporary refreshment station, resupplying trading ships of the Dutch East India Company sailing to and from Asia. But it soon expanded into areas previously used by Khoikhoi communities.

In 1660, Van Riebeeck ordered the planting of a hedge of thorns and native wild almonds, preventing indigenous people from driving their livestock through farms and forests claimed by European settlers. Part of the hedge still survives today, a reminder of the origins of the city – and of the broken promises made to the indigenous people, who had been told that their land would not be taken from them.



Flowers from across South Africa bloom in Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden below Table Mountain

Wandering the colourful Bo-Kaap district gives a sense of the city's blended culture



Groot Constantia's manor house, built in the elegant Cape Dutch style, is furnished as it would have been in the 18th century



2 Groot Constantia Grape expectations

South Africa's rich wine heritage dates back to 1685, when vines were planted on the southern slopes of Table Mountain by Simon van der Stel, one of the first governors of the Dutch Cape Colony. The wines of Constantia became globally renowned, acclaimed by monarchs and statesmen in Europe and North America; it's said that the sweet Grand Constance was a favourite of Napoleon during his exile on St Helena.

Today at Groot Constantia, you can visit the striking 18th-century manor house built in the Cape Dutch style, its rooms furnished and decorated much as they would have been when first occupied. You can also explore the Cloete wine cellar, dating from 1792 – and taste excellent wines. But you'll discover a darker legacy, too: the story of the many enslaved people who worked and lived here until slavery was finally abolished in British colonies in 1834.



3 Bo-Kaap Cultural crossover

Large numbers of enslaved people were brought to Cape Town from Dutch East India Company territories and trading posts, along with some rebels against Dutch rule. Initially, most came from what's now Indonesia and Malaysia, joined by others from India, Sri Lanka, Madagascar and Mozambique. Many were Muslim, while others converted to Islam at the Cape. This shared belief contributed to a common creolised identity that became known as Cape Malay. Distinctive cuisine, music and dress also formed part of this identity, along with a common language that emerged over time: Afrikaans.

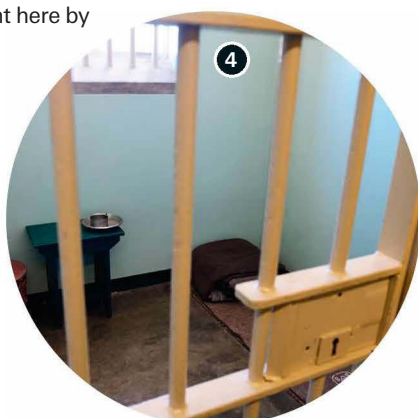
By the early 19th century, a predominantly Muslim district dubbed the Malay Quarter developed on the eastern slope of Signal Hill. Today it is commonly known as Bo-Kaap, 'Above the Cape', because of its elevated position. Mosques and Muslim burial grounds were established among streets of modest but quite lovely vernacular Cape Dutch houses, many now painted in bright colours. Here you can get a sense of the blended culture that evolved among those brought here by the Dutch East India Company.

4 Robben Island Darkest hours

The best-known of the thousands of political prisoners once held on this island in Table Bay, is, of course, Nelson Mandela. The anti-apartheid activist and later president of South Africa served two-thirds of his 27 years of detention here. Now a museum, it's a haunting place to visit, particularly the tiny cell in which Mandela was held before being moved to jails on the mainland.

Robben Island has long been a place of incarceration. It was where the British put chiefs defeated in war, where the indigent poor were displaced, and where a leper colony and mental health hospital were established.

When you return to the mainland, you'll enjoy the same view that navigators, sailors and others coming to Cape Town by ship experienced throughout the centuries, with the spectacular Table Mountain as a backdrop.



Nelson Mandela was held in this small cell in section B of Robben Island Prison for 18 of his 27 years of incarceration

The waters around Cape Point are prone to sudden storms – a key reason why Cape Town evolved to shelter and resupply passing ships



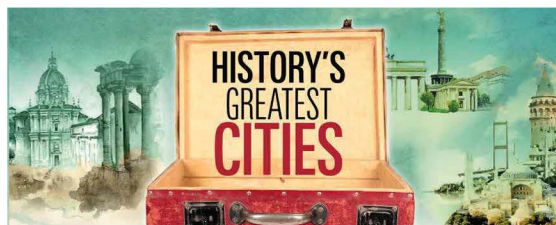
5 Cape of Good Hope & Cape Point Turning point

The craggy promontory stretching south from Table Bay ends beyond the Cape of Good Hope at Cape Point, just to the east. A splendid walkway links them, above a beautiful beach where you can contemplate Francis Drake's 1580 words describing "the fairest cape we saw in the whole circumference of the world".

The southern tip is the reason for Cape Town's name, and why it eventually became a great city. The surrounding seas are afflicted with unpredictable storms; Bartolomeu Dias, the Portuguese navigator who first rounded the headland in 1488, named it the Cape of Storms. So ships sought shelter and took on supplies in Table Bay or False Bay, on the other side of the peninsula.

Visiting the twin capes today, you might spot ostriches, eland, baboons and perhaps penguins. The eastern route here takes you through the beautiful, vine-striped Constantia Valley towards Simon's Town, established in the 18th century as the place ships sheltered from savage north-westerly storms that battered Table Bay in winter months. It's an indication of the reasons for the early direction of Cape Town's suburban growth. **H**

Vivian Bickford-Smith is emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town. He was speaking to travel writer **Paul Bloomfield**, the host of our podcast series *History's Greatest Cities*



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PRIZE CROSSWORD

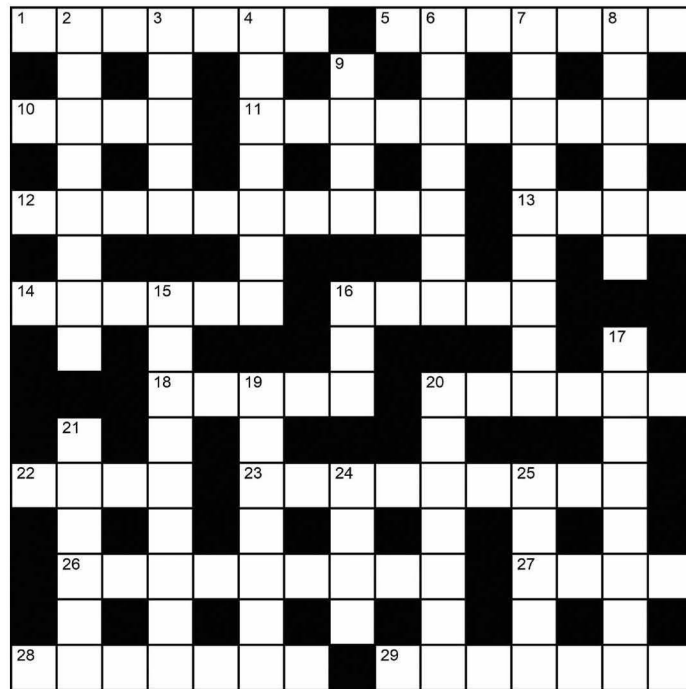
Across

- 1 In ancient Rome, a formal procession in honour of a victorious general (7)
 5 Lise ____, Austrian-born physicist who played a key role in the discovery of nuclear fission but did not share the subsequent 1944 Nobel Prize (7)
 10 ____ of Elea, fifth-century BC Greek philosopher known for his ingenious paradoxes (4)
 11 Ancient Roman festival of mid-February, possibly associated with the she-wolf said to have nursed Romulus and Remus (10)
 12 Columbus's flagship for his first voyage to America, which ran aground on Christmas day 1492 (5,5)
 13 Dame Sibyl Hathaway was the feudal overlord of this Channel Island between 1927 and 1974 (4)
 14 Old British coin worth one-tenth of £1 (6)
 16 Unesco World Heritage Site in Jordan, ancient Nabataean capital (5)
 18 An antique (Latinised) name for the city of Troy (5)
 20 Trajan's ____, the Roman senate's commemoration of that emperor's victory over Dacia (6)
 22 John ____, architect famous for developing Regent's Park and remodelling Brighton Pavilion (4)
 23 Charles Edwards Stuart, 18th-century claimant to the British throne, was dubbed the 'Young ____' (9)
 26 Weapon used in close combat, with a handle of between 30cm and more than 150cm in length (6-3)
 27 ____ Dumnoniorum, the ancient Roman name for Exeter (4)
 28 Lillie ____, who caused a sensation as the first socialite to go on the stage and later became mistress of the future Edward VII (7)
 29 Richard ____, German composer whose controversial association with the Nazi regime has been ascribed to political naivety (7)

Down

- 2 The first Cistercian abbey in northern England, founded in 1132, now a ruin (8)
 3 Vessel first deployed effectively in war by Germany in 1914 (1-4)
 4 Rail sleeping car named after its 19th-century US inventor (7)
 6 Amelia ____, US aviator who disappeared during an attempted round-the-world flight in 1937 (7)

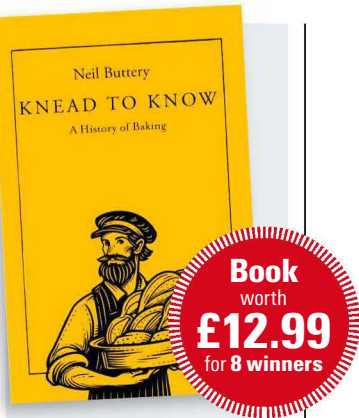
Which socialite and actor became the mistress of the future Edward VII? (28 across)



Which architect designed the Brighton Pavilion? (22 across)

- 7 Area of South Africa settled by Voortrekkers escaping British rule in the south (9)
 8 For example, a Huguenot fleeing France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (6)
 9 The letters emblazoned on the battle standards of the ancient Roman legions (4)
 15 Its burning in 1933 was a major step in establishing the Nazi dictatorship (9)
 16 John ____, English parliamentarian, leader of the 'five members' whom Charles I tried in vain to arrest in January 1642 (3)
 17 Great land mass, its name derived from that of Florentine explorer Vespucci (8)
 19 Nickname of Vlad III of Wallachia (7)
 20 First name of the longest-serving leader of the British Labour party (7)
 21 African country whose first president (1964) was Kenneth Kaunda (6)
 24 Derbyshire 'plague village' that, in 1666, cut itself off to prevent the spread of the disease to neighbouring areas (4)
 25 Anglo-Saxon kingdom that became part of Northumbria in the seventh century (5)

Compiled by Eddie James



Knead to Know: A History of Baking By Neil Buttery

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● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to **BBC History Magazine, October 2024 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA** or email them to **October2024@historycomps.co.uk** by 5pm on 25 September 2024. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the December 2024 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at <https://policies.immediate.co.uk/privacy> ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ☐ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: bbcstudios.com/privacy – bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct

Solution to our August 2024 crossword

Across 1 Mameluke 5 Actium 10 Renan 11 Neolithic 12 Ferdinand 13 Acre 15 Talbot 17 Glasnost 19 Oughtred 21 Gauden 24/9 Jane Goodall 25 Anastasia 28 Endeavour 29 Calvi 30 Beaker 31 Persians
Down: 1 Mary Fitton 2 Manor 3 Lin Biao 4 Kendal 6 Cuirass 7 Isherwood 8 Mace 14 Stannaries 16 La Guardia 18 Lebanon 20 The Pale 22 Atticus 23 Barrie 26 Sulla 27 Webb

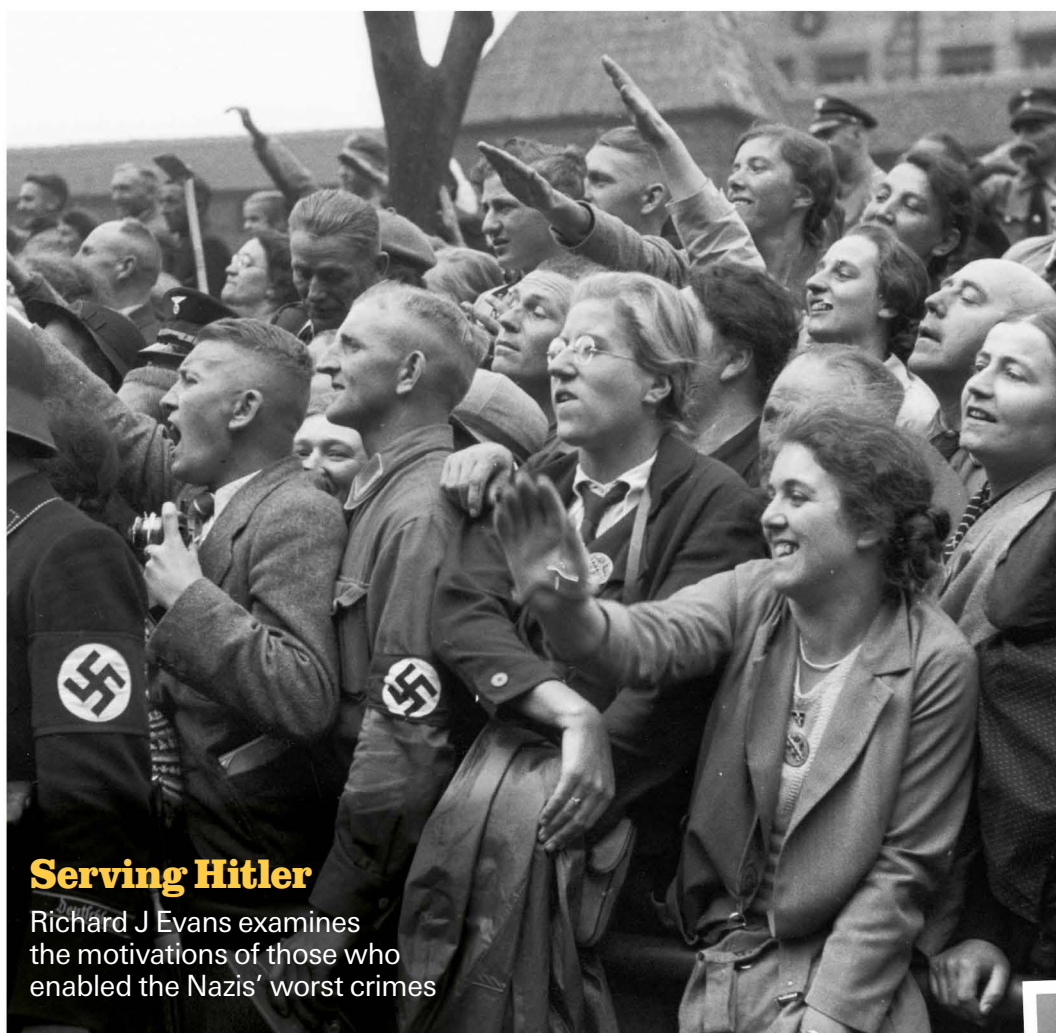
Five winners of Tracks on the Ocean by Sara Caputo:

Beryl Maddison, Bath; Alex Alcoe, St Albans; Trevor Crowe, Bexhill-on-Sea; John Olin, Congleton; Chris Skinner, Ipswich

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Serving Hitler

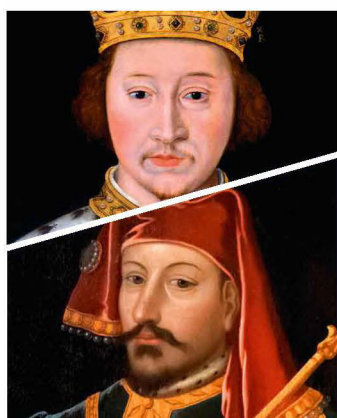
Richard J Evans examines the motivations of those who enabled the Nazis' worst crimes

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The other prince in the Tower

Sarah Norton introduces a third medieval royal who was imprisoned in the fortress



A tale of two kings

Helen Castor considers why the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV followed such different trajectories

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Hakim Adi explores the history of black protest movements in the UK over the decades

Myths of the mummies

Campbell Price challenges popular misconceptions about Egyptian burial practices



The SAS and the embassy

Ben Macintyre tells the story of the 1980 Iranian embassy siege and the dramatic rescue of the hostages

MY HISTORY HERO

BBC social media correspondent Marianna Spring chooses

Nellie Bly

1864–1922



Nellie Bly, pictured in 1890, "helped define what it meant to be a female investigative reporter", says Marianna Spring

IN PROFILE

Born Elizabeth Cochran in Pennsylvania, Nellie Bly is most famous for her record-breaking 72-day trip around the world, emulating the journey taken by Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg. She was also known for her investigative journalism and was once mistaken for a British spy. She has been inducted into America's National Women's Hall of Fame and was one of four female journalists honoured on a set of US stamps.

// She was unafraid to take risks as a journalist, and was dissatisfied covering the sort of topics usually assigned to female reporters **//**



Marianna Spring is the BBC's first disinformation specialist and social media correspondent. Her new book, *Among the Trolls: My Journey Through Conspiracyland*, is out now, published by Atlantic

When did you first hear about Bly?

A year or two ago, when a BBC editor half-jokingly said: "You're a right Nellie Bly!" "Who?", I replied, having never heard of her. So I looked her up, and ended up going down this rabbit hole and finding out everything I could about this remarkable woman.

What kind of woman was she?

Nellie was brave, principled and determined. You have to remember that she lived at a time when a lot of editors would not hire a woman as a reporter. She was not afraid to put herself out there and do things that were atypical for a woman then. Just as importantly, she was willing to place herself in difficult situations – as I have done in my online, social media and conspiracy theory investigations – to do the sort of reporting she wanted to do.

What made her a hero?

She might be best known for emulating the fictional Phileas Fogg's 80-day journey around the world. But I most admire her for her investigative journalism, very often exposing harms women faced at the time. In one article she lambasted working conditions for women, and in another she argued for reform of America's divorce laws. She was unafraid to take risks as a journalist, and was dissatisfied covering the sort of topics usually assigned to female reporters in those days, such as fashion, society and gardening.

What was Bly's finest hour?

Many would no doubt single out her record-breaking, mostly solo trip around the world, but for me it's the 'Ten Days in a Mad-House' series of articles that she wrote for a New York paper in the 1880s. Going undercover, she feigned insanity so as to investigate reports of brutality and neglect at the Women's Lunatic Asylum on the city's Roosevelt Island. Her revelations caused a sensation and resulted in the asylum introducing long-overdue reforms. Her journalism helped define what it meant to be a female investigative reporter.

Can you see parallels between Bly's life and your own?

Yes, in our style of journalism and our principled approach. Sometimes people ask me why I do my kind of journalism, at the risk of being trolled. But I believe that there are things happening that need to be exposed, just as Nellie did. Like her, I'm also a great believer in giving voice to people whose stories would otherwise be unheard.

What would you ask Bly if you could meet her?

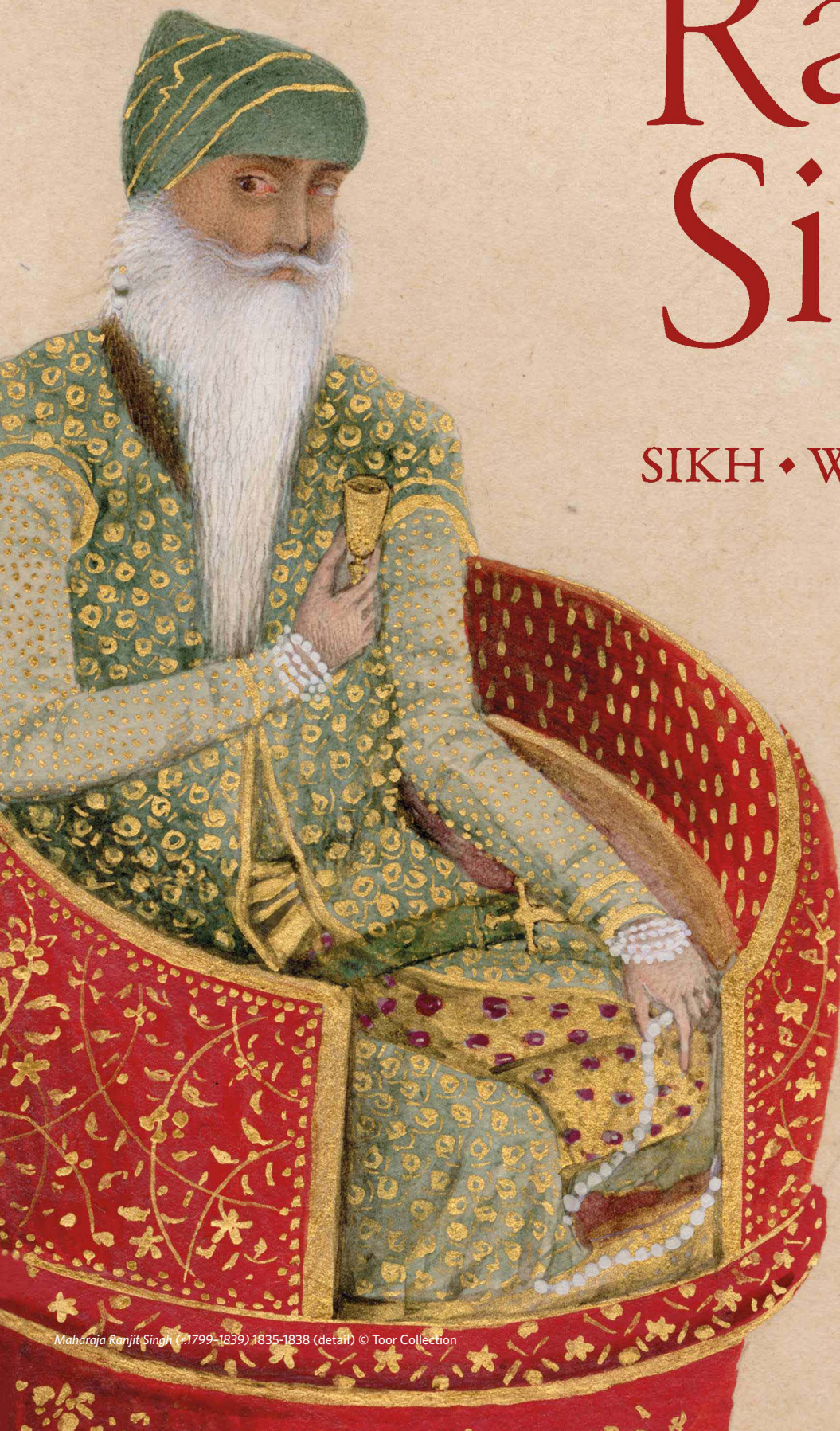
I'd love to know how she'd respond if she was in my shoes and had to deal with some of the trolls that I do online. **H**

Marianna Spring was talking to York Membery



In the BBC Radio 4 series **Great Lives**, guests discuss inspirational figures: bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxs8





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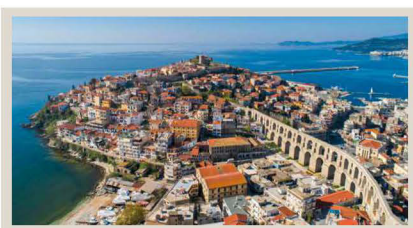
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